Chinoy woman trader abducted by Abu Sayyaf in Sulu

Story on PAGE A2

GMA on popularity dip: We bear our own crosses

By Carlito Pablo and Christine Avendaño

IN KEEPING with Holy Week tradition, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday issued a Palm Sunday message that spoke of the need for everyone to bear the cross of insult and ridicule.

But because of her lowest-ever popularity ratings—an apparent result of her all-out support for the US-led war in

GMA/A18

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Lenten season smells of 'tinapa' in Tarlac

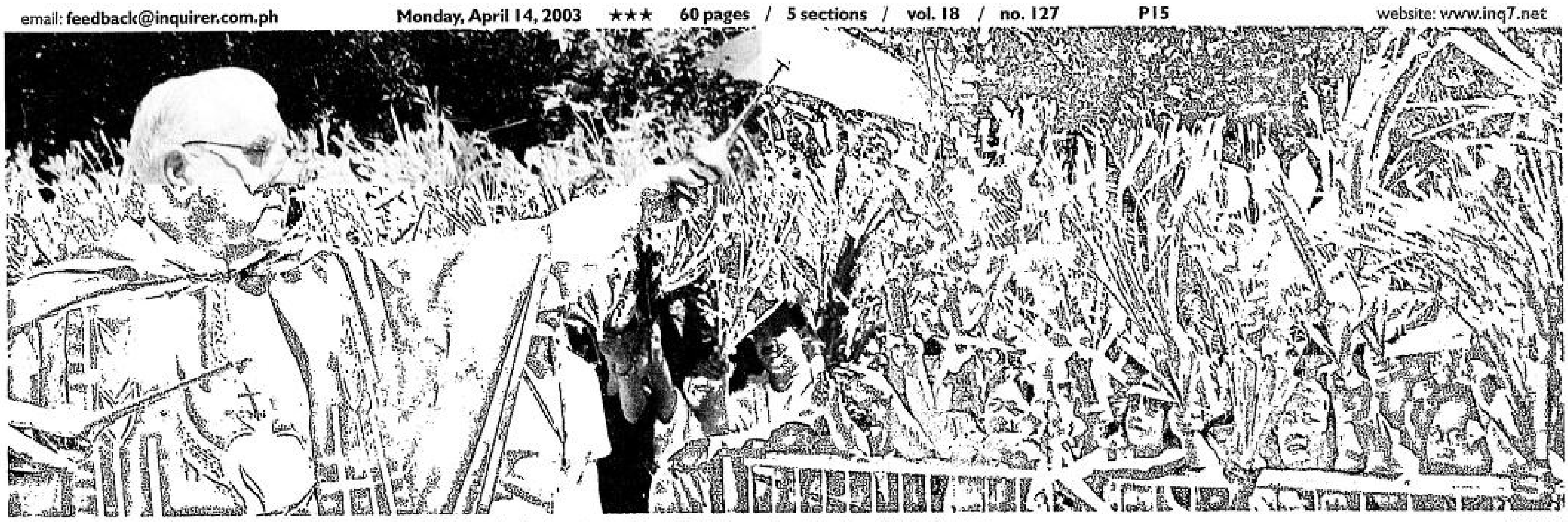
By Jo Clemente
PDI C. Luzon Desk

TAMANG-TAMA SA SEMANA SANTA!!!

CAPAS, Tarlac—You know you have reached Barangay Talaga when, walking or driving through in the next few days, you are suddenly engulfed in

LENTEN/A18

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Monday, April 14, 2003 ★★★ 60 pages / 5 sections / vol. 18 / no. 127 P15 website: www.inq7.net



FR. Mick Keenan blesses the palm fronds brought by the faithful at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran in celebration of Palm Sunday.

ERIK ARAZAS

Breakthrough on SARS

Canada scientists crack genetic code of virus

HONG KONG—A laboratory in Canada, the country hardest hit by the SARS killer pneumonia outside Asia, has cracked the genetic code of the virus that has so far killed 130 people and infected more than 3,200 in more than 30 countries.

As new deaths from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) were reported in Canada, Hong Kong, China and Vietnam over the weekend, scientists at the Genome Sciences Center in Vancouver on Saturday said they had made progress toward developing a diagnostic test—and perhaps ultimately a cure—for the flu-like illness.

Officials yesterday said five more people had died of SARS in Hong Kong, pushing the territory's total death toll to 40. There were 42 new cases of SARS reported in Hong Kong on Sunday, bringing the total infections to 1,150. But officials said 223 patients had recovered and had been discharged from hospitals.

China remains the hardest hit with 60 dead, and Canada with 13. Singapore has reported nine deaths; Vietnam, five; Thailand, two, and Malaysia, one.

Possible new cases of the illness were identified over the weekend in several other countries, including Canada, Singapore and New Zealand, which reported its first suspected SARS case.

Scientists around the world have been racing against the clock to identify the virus and find a cure for the disease that has baffled doctors because SARS symptoms are so unusual and the death rate relatively high.

Patients often started out with a high fever and dry cough. These flu-like symptoms were followed by pneumonia that prevented patients from breathing and, in the worst cases, caused their

BREAKTHROUGH/A18

Gov't to foot medical bills of patients

THE GOVERNMENT will shoulder the medical expenses of Filipinos with probable cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome as part of its efforts to isolate and contain the killer pneumonia, Malacañang said yesterday.

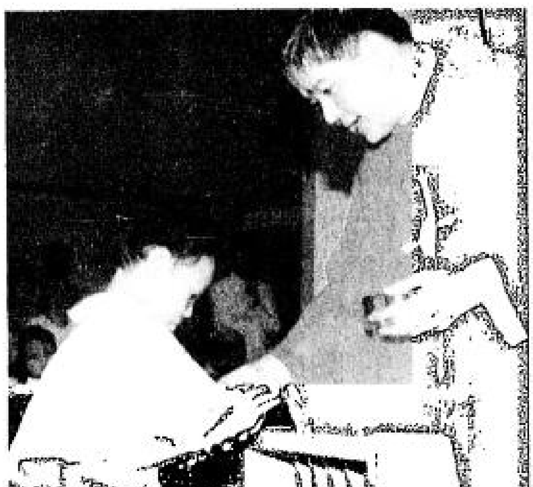
"Patients will be brought directly to the RITM [Regional Institute for Tropical Medicine] or the San Lazaro Hospital, and [their medical expenses] will be funded by the government," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said over radio station dzMM.

He was referring to the P1.5-billion SARS contingency fund that was earlier set aside by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Bunye also said preparations were in place for the expected influx of vacationing Filipino workers, who are mostly Catholics, from Hong Kong this Holy Week. The former British colony has been severely affected by SARS, accounting for 1,109 of over 3,242 cases in about 30 countries and resulting in 40 deaths, according to World Health Organization officials. *(See figures on Page A18)*

Airline passengers departing from

GOV'T/A18



ROGER MARCALLO

JOSE Magtangol Manalili, a cancer survivor, gets his dream of "priesthood" during the Palm Sunday Mass at the Edsa Shrine with Bishop Socrates Villegas.

Boy with cancer gets wish to become 'priest'

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE EDSA Shrine, a homage to People Power I that toppled a dictator and venue of People Power II that ousted an impeached president, yesterday became the place where a young boy battling cancer fulfilled his dream.

Jose Magtanggol "Tanggol" Manalili, 7, got his wish and became a "priest" at the Edsa Shrine, a site declared holy ground by the Vatican two years ago.

Tanggol, who suffers from acute myelogenous leukemia M5, joined Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas in celebrating Palm Sunday Mass at the jampacked shrine.

He wore a priest's vestments and cap, and was seated near the altar, along with 15 young girls and boys who were given a day as little nuns and priests.

Tanggol made his first confession and received his first communion from Villegas at the historic site. It was the first time he met the bishop. The boy said he wanted to be like Villegas someday.

"He knows his Catholic faith . . . What excites him is not even getting healed but pleasing God and never being separated from Him," Villegas said during his homily, referring to Tanggol.

BOY/A18

Aeta village proud of its young grads

By Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

PASTOLAN VILLAGE, Hermosa, Bataan—Each of them dreams of becoming "somebody" someday and wishes to bring pride to their tribe.

In a very rare occasion, members of the Aeta community here felt proud of themselves and saw hope for their village through 18 youths who would soon enroll in high school.

On April 3, 12 Aeta boys and six Aeta girls, the first batch of graduates of the Pastolan Elementary School, received their grade school diplomas.

Class valedictorian Laarni Bautista, 13, said she wanted to become a nurse and take care of her fellow Aeta. She said she owed her triumph to her parents who

AETA/A20

Bid to sell RP assets in Japan revived

By Jerry Esplanada

IS history repeating itself?

Like the possible sale of seven government-owned properties in the United States, "a parallel effort is being undertaken by the Privatization Council for government properties in Japan," Finance Undersecretary Eric Recto told the INQUIRER.

But Recto said the outright sale of the Japanese properties—two in Tokyo and another two in Kobe—was "out of the question."

The finance official, who oversees the disposition of the Philippine government's real estate in the United States and Japan, admitted that the council was already being criticized over the Japanese properties.

BID/A19

CAMELS are led past US Marines with the 15th Expeditionary unit, Echo Company, at a checkpoint in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah on Saturday.

AP

US forces meeting resistance in Tikrit, last Saddam bastion

BAGHDAD—US Marines were fighting Iraqi forces, including tanks, on the southern outskirts of Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit on Sunday, a Canadian journalist with the US forces told CNN.

"They (the Americans) launched their attack about an hour and a half ago," Matthew Fisher of Canada's National Post newspaper told the channel in a live telephone call from Tikrit.

"It's a very, very significant attack. They've brought forward a great number of Cobra assault helicopters and there are Marine F-18s (aircraft) overhead."

Meanwhile, Gen. Tommy Franks, the commander of the war, disclosed that US forces have samples of DNA from Saddam and other Iraqi leaders for potential use in the ongoing effort to determine if he is alive or dead.

"We have the forensic capability to chase that down and we will chase that down," Franks told CNN. Of Saddam, Franks said: "He's either dead or he's running a lot, but he's not commanding anything right now."

THE WAR
DAY 25

A Kurdish television station reported that the half brother of Saddam, Watban al-Tikriti, was captured in northern Iraq.

Al-Tikriti, a former interior minister and a Saddam adviser, was found northwest of Mosul in an apparent attempt to reach Syria, said KTV, a station operated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the two main Kurdish factions. The station gave no other details. Kurdish officials reached by The Associated Press could not immediately confirm the report.

Earlier, Franks said the "decisive military operations" phase of the war was moving toward the end but the fighting was not yet over.

"I wouldn't say it's over but I will say we have American forces in Tikrit right now. When last I checked this force was moving on Tikrit and there

US FORCES/A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms mostly over Mindanao.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/04/14/03

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Second FRONTPAGE

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Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

WOMAN TRADER SEIZED

Abus take new hostage

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A Chinese-Filipino businesswoman was abducted yesterday by the Abu Sayyaf kidnap gang in the island of Siasi in Sulu, the regional police chief said.

Five gunmen seized Gertrudes Tan as she was on her way to a mosque, said Chief Supt. Acmad Omar.

The gunmen then sped off with their captive to the nearby island of Jolo, a known stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, which has been linked by the United States to the al-Qaida network of terror mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Police set up roadblocks in known haunts of the Abu Sayyaf in an attempt to catch the kidnappers, Omar said.

In another development, soldiers raided a hideout of the Abu Sayyaf in Maimbung town in Jolo on Saturday and recovered five rifles and assorted ammunition, a military report said.

However, the Abu Sayyaf members escaped by fleeing in a motorboat.

In Central Mindanao, two civilians were wounded when Moro rebels attacked two towns in North Cotabato on Friday.

The military identified the wounded as Pepito Bala, 17, and Virgie Suico, 51, residents of Barangay Malanduage in Kabacan.

According to the report, the rebels used grenade launchers and rifle-propelled grenades to attack the houses in the barangay at about 2 a.m. on Friday while other rebel units harassed the villages of Orchids and Cadena de Amor simultaneously.

Minutes later, MILF demolition experts bombed a National Power Corp. tower in Carmen town, the military said. The tower was not damaged.

Later that night, a group of 20 rebels attacked a police Kababayan center in Matalam town, sparking a 15-minute firefight. No one was injured in the incident.

Davao City prosecutors, meanwhile, said that two young men suspected of involvement in separate bombings in the city over the past month had confessed that they were promised P50,000 each to carry out the attacks.

Tohami Bagundang, 19, and 17-year-old "Sammy" were arrested last Tuesday along with three others for alleged participation in the attacks at the Sasa Wharf in Davao City and the Davao International Airport.

Bagundang said in a statement to prosecutors last Friday that To Akmad, who was among those arrested, had told him to place a bag containing a bomb under a table at a barbecue stand outside the ferry passenger terminal at the wharf.

Before leaving the area, he said he saw Akmad press a remote control device and the bomb exploded, said assistant prosecutor Danilo Belo.

The April 2 blast at the wharf killed 16 people and injured 55.

Bagundang also told prosecutors the group had originally targeted the Super Ferry, which arrived late that afternoon and was scheduled to leave before midnight. But tight security prevented them from bringing the bomb aboard the vessel. *AFP and AP, with a report from Martin Marfil*

MILITANTS depict the suffering of human rights victims under the Macapagal administration, to mark the beginning of Holy Week in Lucena City.

DELFIN MALLARI JR.

Militants stage their version of 'Calvary'

LUCENA CITY—Militant groups in Southern Tagalog marked the start of Holy Week yesterday with a depiction of alleged human rights violations under the Macapagal administration in their version of the Passion of Christ dubbed the "Kalbaryo ng Bayan" (The Nation's Calvary).

Performers composed of students and "real" victims of rights abuse by the police and the military presented a street play in front of the city public market that showed "inspiring tableaus and scenes of the true calvary of a nation torn by poverty and injustice."

"We still have 19 families of internal refugees composed of 103 individuals in Dasmariñas, Cavite. They all still await resettlement and start of new lives in a new community. They no longer want to return to their homes for fear of the military," said Eden Marcellana, Karapatan-ST chair.

A black 9-ft skull puppet hovered over the performers, signifying the plea for justice for all human rights victims.

Another puppet covered with white cloth on which was depicted the face of Christ also figured in the performance.

"It signifies that good will always prevail," said one of the play's coordinators.

Marcellana said that 1,019 cases of human rights violations, with 64 deaths, have been recorded in Southern Tagalog since President Macapagal-Arroyo came to power.

She claimed Southern Tagalog had the highest number of human rights violations, next to Mindanao, because of militarization. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Iraqi diplomats lose privileges, immunity

THE PHILIPPINES has withdrawn diplomatic privileges and immunity from the Iraqi Embassy staff still in the country and has ordered foreign affairs officials to cease all contact with them, a source said Sunday.

The source in the Department of Foreign Affairs said the Iraqis "will not be invited to official or diplomatic functions," and their diplomatic identification cards and car plates would not be renewed.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, however, said the Iraqis would not be deported due to the unstable situation in their homeland.

"If we deport them now, they might be slaughtered by an angry mob back in Iraq," the source said.

Manila is also ready to freeze the embassy's funds so these could be turned over to the diplomats a new Iraqi government may send over, the source added. The embassy reportedly has about $100,000 banked in the Philippines.

On Thursday, Ople had said the Iraqi diplomats were "in a sort of limbo in the sense that a question may be asked as to what government they represent," following the apparent downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

But he said the Philippines would continue to provide security to the Iraqi embassy and its personnel.

The Philippines was a staunch supporter of the US-led war on Iraq.

In February and March, the country expelled three Iraqi diplomats for alleged espionage and for supposedly having contact with Muslim separatists in Mindanao.

AFP

RP favors bigger UN role in Iraq

THE PHILIPPINES, which had allied itself with the United States in its war with Iraq, is in favor of an increased United Nations role in the long-term development of that country following the demise of President Saddam Hussein's regime.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said that while it is acceptable the US and Britain take an active role in meeting Iraq's "immediate concerns," the UN should have a hand in the building of a state in Baghdad.

"I expect that for the near and immediate term, the United States and its allies on the ground would have an important and direct role," Ople said in a statement. "But I believe that once (the coalition forces) have addressed the immediate needs, the United Nations should have and will have an increased role" in rebuilding Iraq.

"I also believe the Iraqi people, through an interim Iraqi government, should have a strong say in all this," Ople said.

Ople said the international debate on who should take control in Iraq following the fall of Saddam should not get in the way of humanitarian efforts to help the Iraqi people.

"On our part, we are prepared to send a humanitarian team to Iraq, whether under a mechanism set up by the US or the UN."

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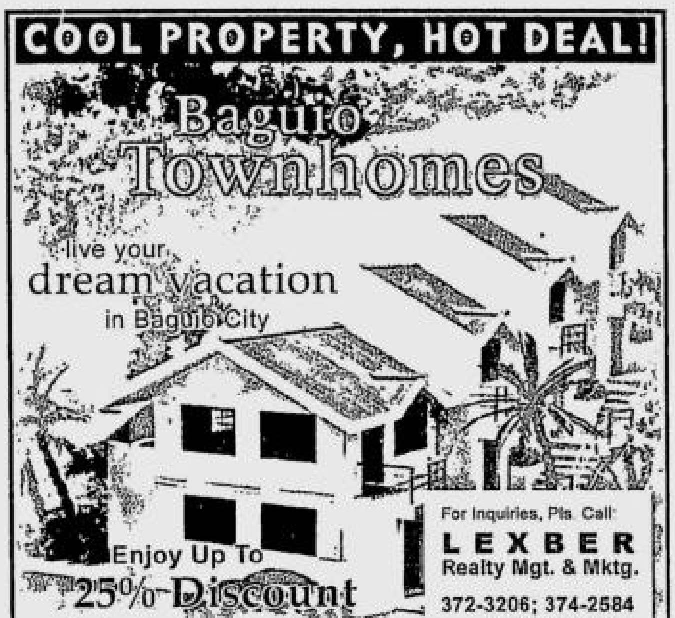

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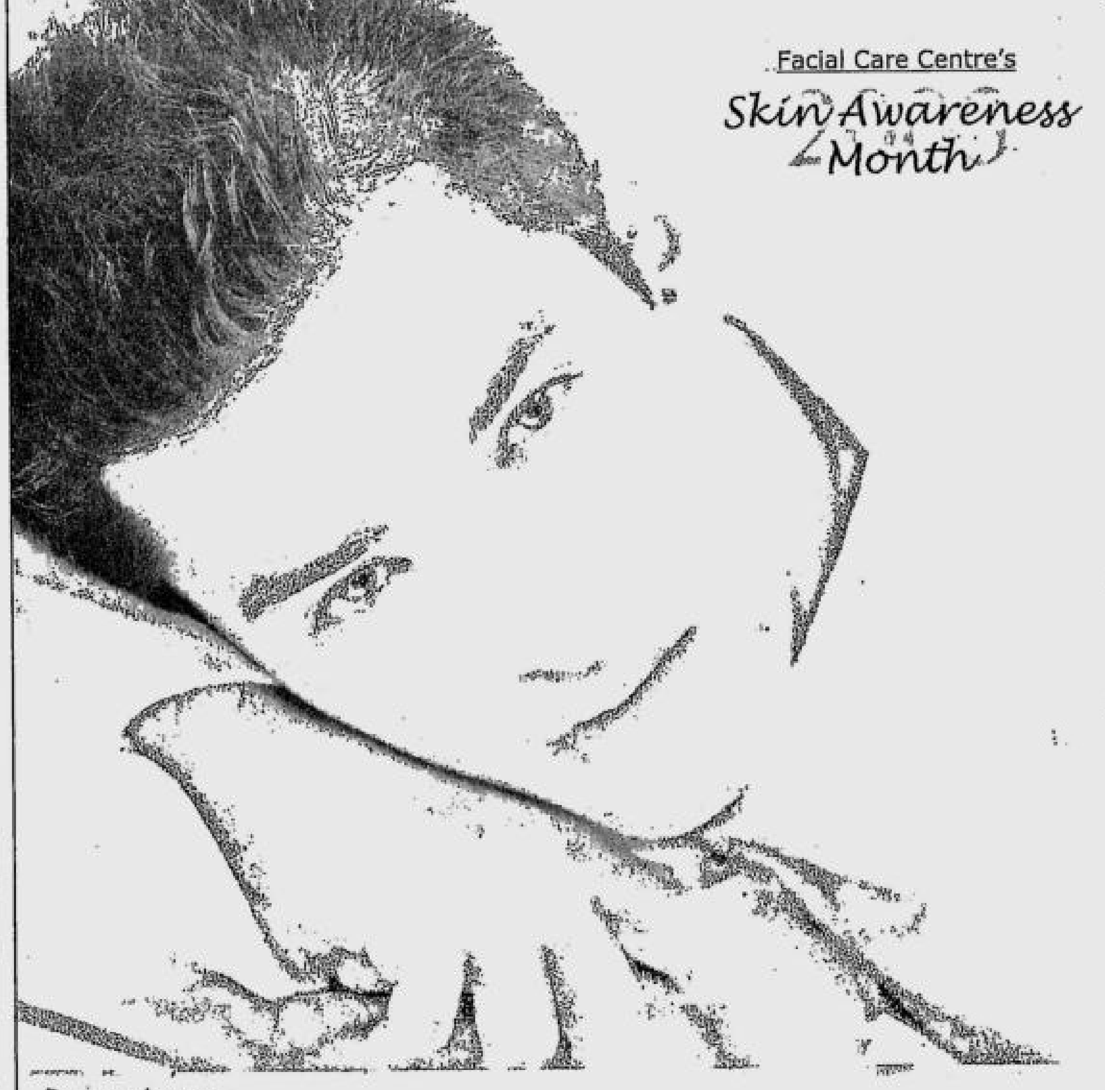

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US visa rules to work vs Pinoys–Ople

THE FOREIGN affairs department has warned that the United States has adopted new and more stringent security measures and screening procedures that are likely to affect Filipinos wishing to enter or emigrate to the US.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople has expressed concern the new measures could affect "the opportunities for Filipinos to secure visas for legitimate travel to the US."

The DFA will be closely monitoring the process to make sure that the interest of those Filipinos are not affected, he said in a statement.

The US adopted the new security procedures as part of the precautionary measures under the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act passed by the US Congress in 2002, in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Ople said US consular and immigration officials will now have access to more complete and improved information banks as they scrutinize potential visa applicants and emigrants to the US.

The eligibility of visa applicants or anyone wishing to enter the US will be evaluated using newly established information sharing systems such as the Intelligence Border Inspection System and Terrorist Threat Integration Center.

Meanwhile, Filipinos who have submitted petitions or applications with the defunct US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—since taken over by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS)—but who have not heard anything from either of these agencies have reason to worry.

In late January, private firms contracted by the INS at the Western Service Center were indicted for destroying 90,000 documents at the California Service Center in 2002.

The shredding wasn't undertaken by INS federal officers but by private contractors. These are private firms that, under contract with the federal government, carry out mail room operations, which include receiving and acknowledging petitions and applications as well as sending out approval notices and transmitting approved petitions to the National Visa Center.

Indicted

Based on published accounts and court records, the manager of the Western Service Center mail room, Dawn Randall, 24, was indicted at the end of January by a federal grand jury, along with a supervisor who worked under her, Leonel Salazar, 34. The two were accused of ordering low-level employees to destroy thousands of documents beginning in February of 2002 and several months after.

The reason: to reduce a growing backlog of unprocessed paperwork that the Western Service Center was facing.

According to the indictment, Randall ordered her subordinates at the INS to count the number of unprocessed papers in the filing center. They indicated to her that about 90,000 documents were waiting to be handled.

According to the report, she ordered at least five night shift workers to begin shredding many boxes of these papers. By the end of March, no backlog existed. Problem solved but Randall continued the shredding orders.

Without any backlog, the INS supervisors were happy, but not so the people who had filed petitions and applications and who had been waiting and wondering why they had not received any word from the INS.

What type?

The question is what type of documents were destroyed?

Since some applicants submitted original documents, it is likely that these documents establishing the petitioner's eligibility and establishing the relationship between petitioner and beneficiary are gone for good. These include US passports, foreign passports, asylum applications, I-140 petitions, I-129 petitions, employment authorization, advanced parole requests and applications for US citizenship.

The INS appeared to have no clue as to what was happening.

Neither the INS nor the new bureau that took over its functions, the BCIS, have been helpful in determining what petitioners and applicants could do, other than asking them to send duplicate petitions and applications if they believe their documents were among the 90,000 documents destroyed.

For those who sent original documents—passports, citizenship certificates, certificates of marriage and birth—it would take months of agonized waiting. *Norman Bordadora, with a report from Crispin R. Aranda, a US-based immigrant specialist and executive director of the Immigrant Visa Center.*

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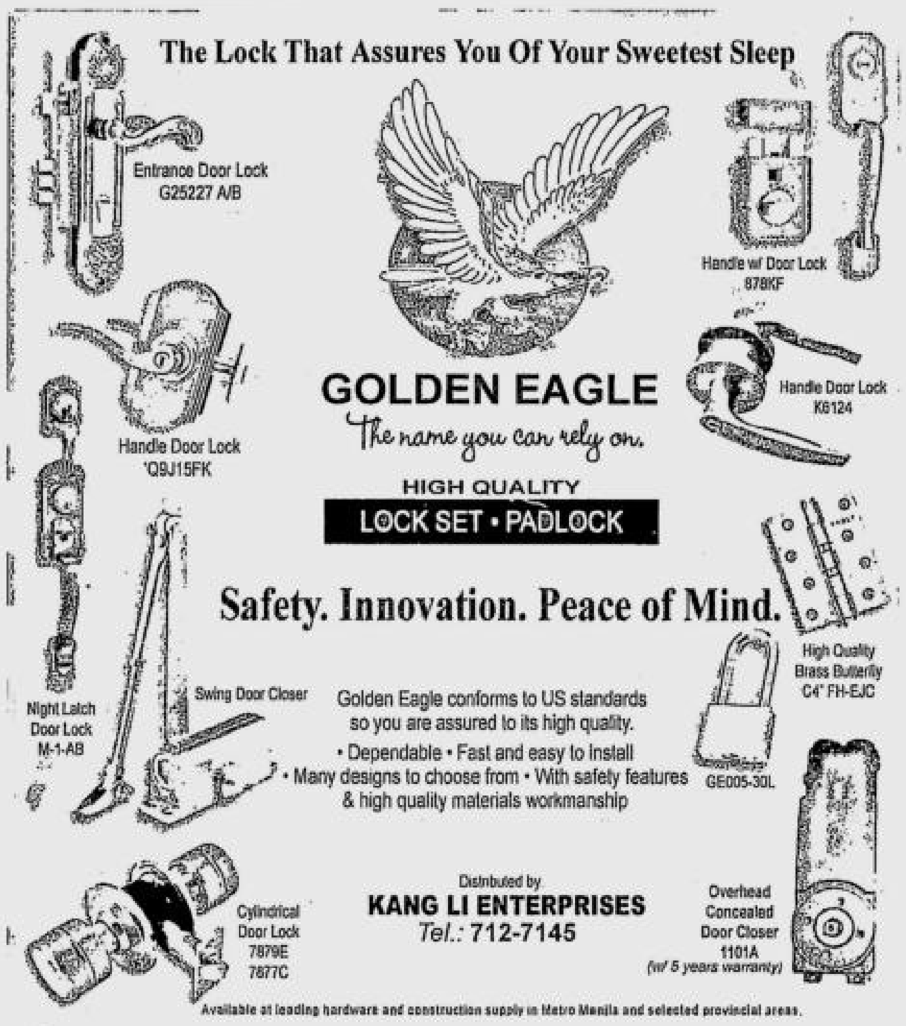

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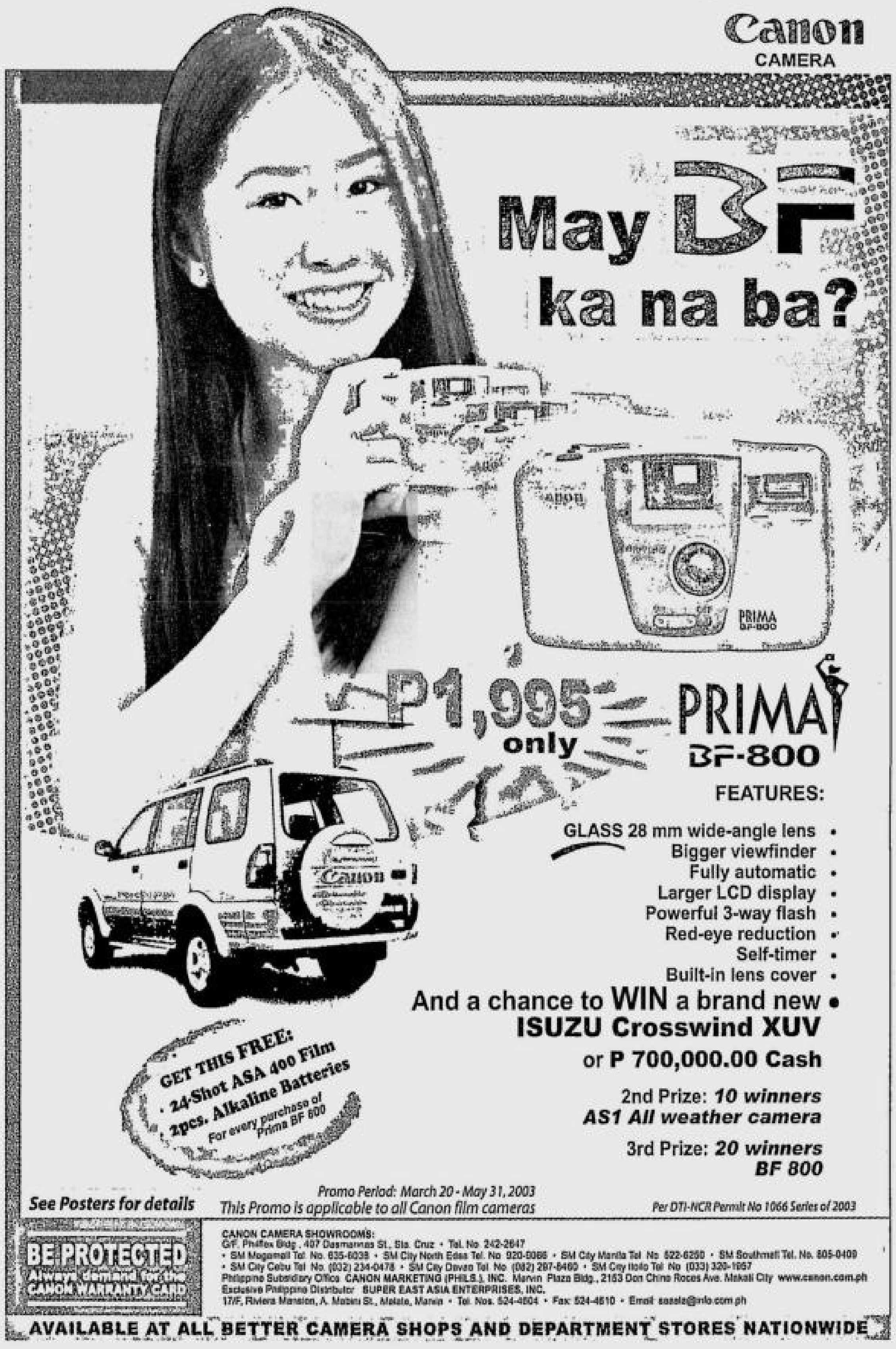

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Stop 'babying' Meralco, lawmaker tells Malacañang

By Agnes E. Donato

"STOP the Manila Electric Co.'s profiteering, instead of treating the company like a baby."

This is what Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran told Malacañang yesterday in reaction to the government's recent expression of concern for Meralco's claim it is suffering "serious financial woes."

"Instead of worrying about Meralco, Malacañang should concern itself with the situation faced by Meralco customers who are being exploited to the hilt by the thieving electricity firm's various anomalous charges, the biggest of which is the infamous purchased power adjustment (PPA)," Beltran said.

The Supreme Court on Thursday came to a final decision ordering Meralco to refund electricity consumers P28 billion in overcharges since 1994.

Beltran said that contrary to its assertion, Meralco was "not really in the red, but in fact continues to earn billions in ill-gotten profits through massive overcharging."

"The Macapagal administration should be more concerned with the plight of Meralco's customers. For decades, these customers—all three million of them—have been at the mercy of Meralco and subjected to arbitrary, onerous and anomalous charges," Beltran said.

"The consumers' capacity to pay for Meralco's electricity has not improved, meanwhile its service continues to deteriorate," he said.

Beltran also claimed that Meralco, unlike its customers, had the means to immediately recover dips in its profit margin by, for instance, imposing more arbitrary rate increases.

"Electricity is a vital social service, but instead of providing this, Meralco is into rate gouging and immoral profiteering. It's gotten away with this for decades, and this has to stop now," he said.

PLDT set to axe 1,500 employees

DOMINANT carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. is set to let go of another 1,200 to 1,500 employees, after the retrenchment of around 600 employees last December.

The company said in a statement yesterday the new "manpower reduction program" was being done in response to the difficult fixed line environment, a phenomenon not unique to the Philippine telecommunications industry.

PLDT senior vice president for human resources Victorico Vargas said fixed line providers abroad were doing the same thing to keep their businesses afloat.

"PLDT regrets having to make this very difficult decision but must do so in order to survive the hurdles of the fixed line business due to increasing competition, significant changes in technology, and shifting market preferences that have reshaped the future of our business," he said.

A company memo about the new manpower reduction program was recently circulated and employees were given up to the end of the month to accept or decline the separation package.

An officer of the Manggagawa ng Komunikasyon sa Pilpinas, PLDT's rank-and-file union, said management has started offering "better" packages for employees who would voluntarily leave the company.

MKP assistant auditor Mar Soriano said PLDT would retain only about 7,000 of its 13,000 employees nationwide in the next few years. Management, however, had yet to confirm the union's claim.

"The new package is better," Soriano told the INQUIRER in a phone interview yesterday, adding that the union could not stop workers from availing of the benefits.

"It's their right. We cannot stop them, although I think they should think about it a hundred times," Soriano said. *Abigail L. Ho and Blanche S. Rivera*

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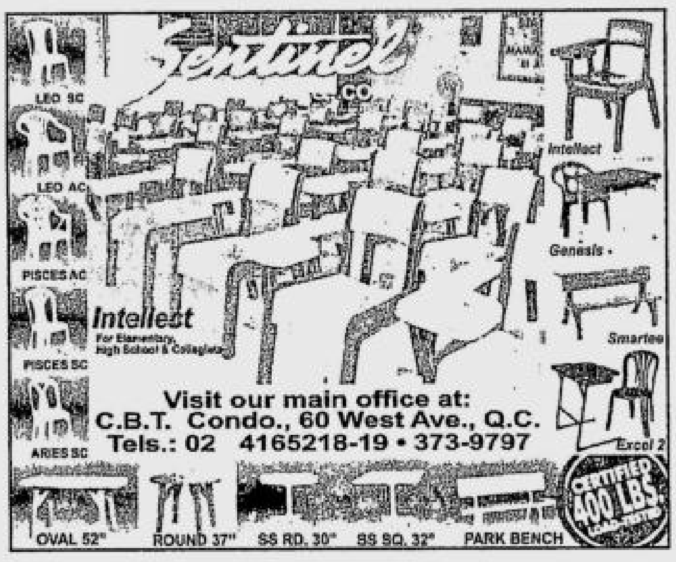

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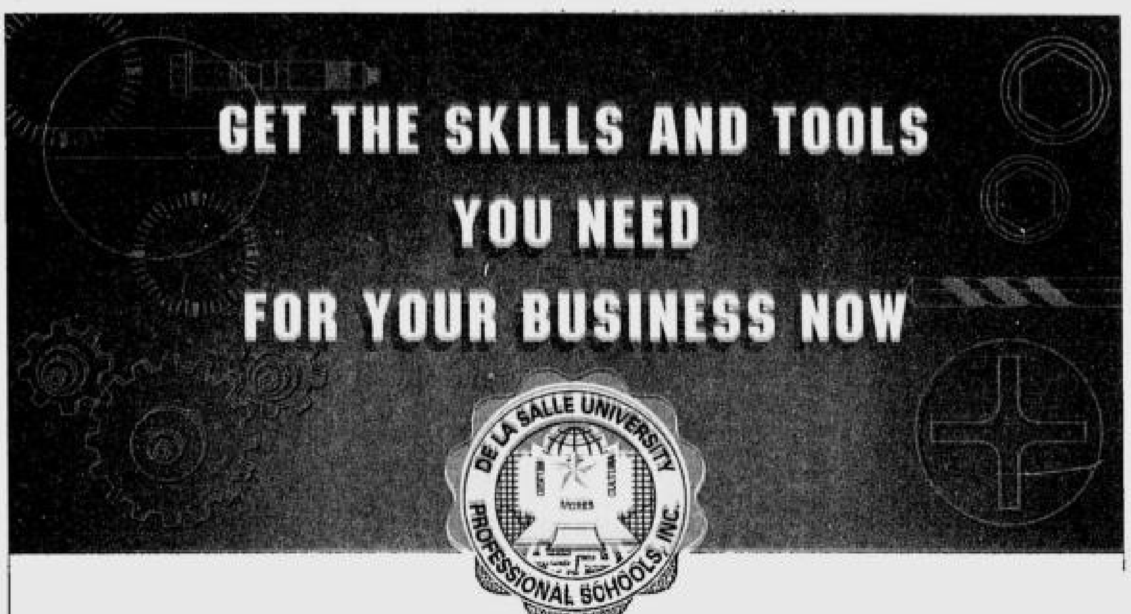
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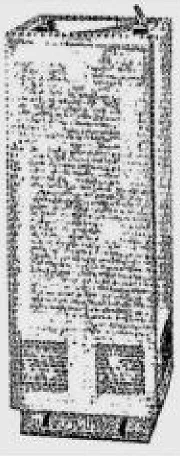

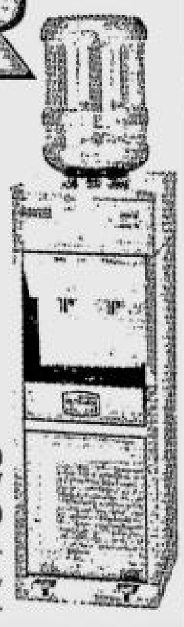

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GSIS makes ₱30-B retirement loan fund available

By Clarissa S. Batino

A P30-BILLION loan facility will be opened by the Government Service Insurance System beginning next month for members who would like to advance their retirement benefits.

The GSIS Retirement Loan Program will serve all government employees with at least 180 months of integrated contributions and no outstanding loans.

Even a member who has defaulted on a previous loan will be allowed to avail of the offer if part of the proceeds is used to settle his outstanding obligations.

GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia said the new loan program was initiated to further enhance benefits for the pension fund's 1.5 million members.

"This is on top of the regular salary loan," said Garcia.

Expected to take advantage of the new facility are 60 percent of eligible borrowers.

Qualified members 60 years old and above may borrow up to 50 percent of their retirement benefits; and those below 60, as much as half of their accrued separation benefits.

A one-time processing fee of one percent will be collected prior to the loan release.

Garcia pointed out that the retirement loan, with an annual interest rate of 10 percent, was a "reasonable" assistance for GSIS members in need.

"It would be better for (them) to take advantage of the program instead of advancing cash from their credit cards or going to loan sharks," said the GSIS president.

The pension fund has also installed flexible payment schemes. A borrower may choose between monthly and term (quarterly, semi-annual) payments, or pay only the interest and settle the principal at the time of retirement or separation.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, April 14, 2003
Monday of Holy Week

1st Reading: Is 42:1-7
Gospel: Jn 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where he had raised Lazarus, the dead man, to life. Now they gave a dinner for him, and while Martha waited on them, Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus.

Then Mary took a pound of costly perfume made from genuine nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Judas, son of Simon Iscariot-the disciple who was to betray Jesus-remarked, "This perfume could have been sold for three hundred silver coins and turned over to the poor." Judas, indeed, had no concern for the poor; he was a thief and as he held the common purse, he used to help himself to the funds.

But Jesus spoke up, "Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial? (The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me.)"

Many Jews heard that Jesus was there and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests thought about killing Lazarus as well, for many of the Jews were drifting away because of him and believing in Jesus.

Commentary

Judas criticizes Mary for anointing Jesus' feet, saying the money could have been given to the poor. One would expect Jesus to agree. Why should such a sum be wasted when it could have in fact been used to feed many. But that isn't what happened. Instead Jesus turns to Judas and rebukes him, not because what he had said made no sense. But precisely because it made too much sense-at least in Judas' calculating mind. The gospel reading tells us why Judas found Mary's action unacceptable. It wasn't really because he cared for the poor, but because he stole money from the group's contributions. Intentions and motives, as always, made all the difference. Mary's action may have been extravagant, but her motive was pure. Judas' indignation may have been understandable, even salutary, but his motive was impure. For God what is in the heart is what counts the most.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE) - Issuance of writ of execution to enforce the judgment - The general rule is when a court's judgment or order becomes final and executory, it is the ministerial duty of the trial court to issue a writ of execution to enforce the judgment or order. In this case, because of the innumerable delays, the enforcement of the final orders and decision has been long overdue. The delays are partly attributable to the fact that the case went through a number of presiding judges. The filing of unauthorized motions and appeal by Navarro complicated what was otherwise just a simple case of enforcement of final judgment. But it was petitioner's intolerable strategy of filing motions, some belatedly filed, to thwart execution that caused this case to drag for more than a decade. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Carpio, First Division, Natalia Realty, Inc. v. Court Of Appeals (Former Ninth Division), G.R. No. 126462. November 12, 2002]

DIGEST BY R. B. VERA

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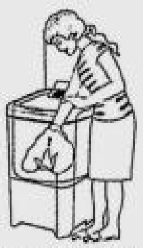

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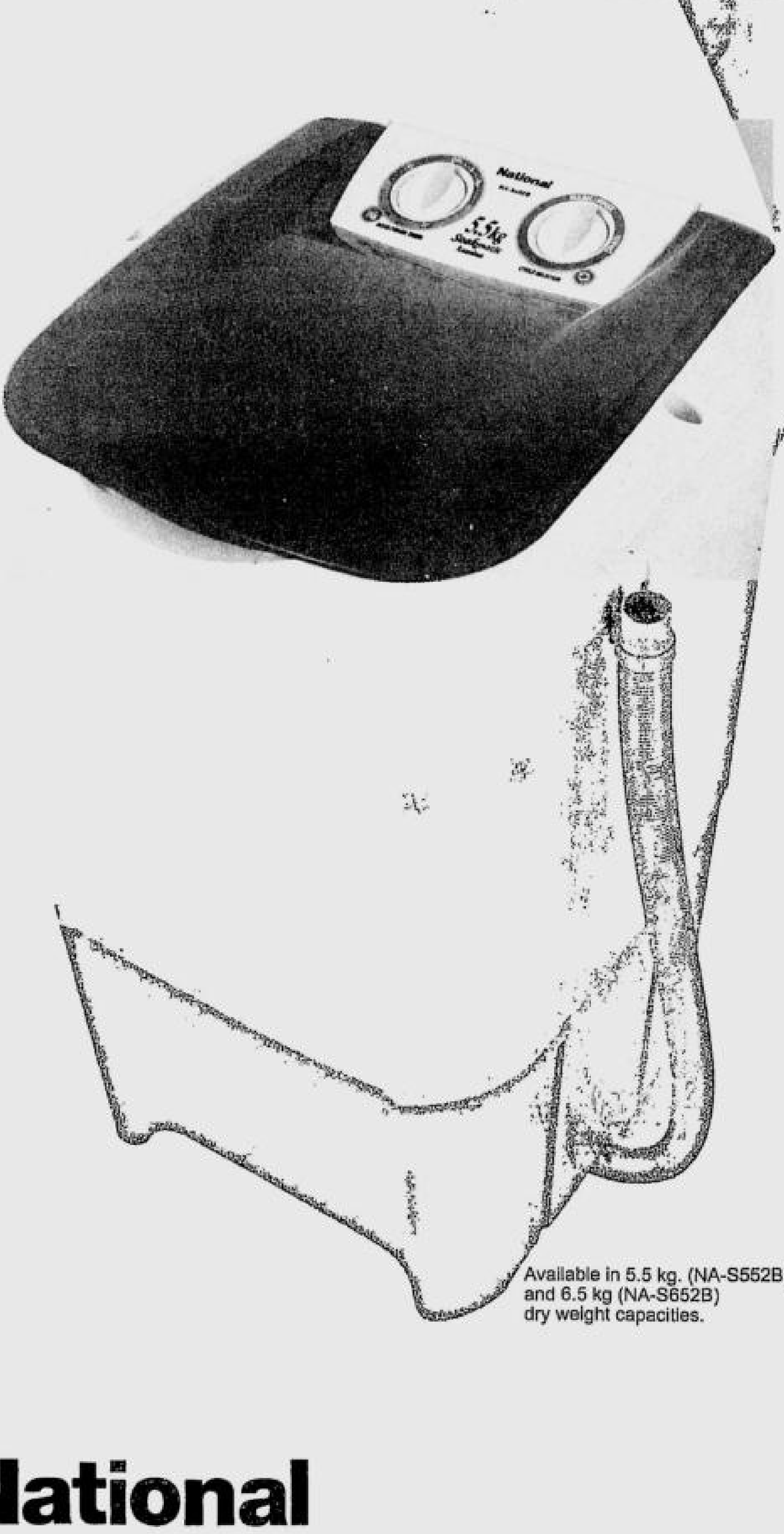

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National

Japan loses allure for Pinay singer

Inquirer series helps 'Ann' make up her mind

By TJ Burgonio

"ANN" was all set to fly to Japan last month to work as a singer. She had everything ready—her clothes, 20 "minus-one" tapes and a songbook—and was already counting the dollars she would be earning.

But she changed her mind after reading the series of articles in the INQUIRER last March on the trafficking of Filipino sex workers to Japan.

The 28-year-old Ann recalled being particularly "shocked" by the story of a talent who was raped by the owner of the Japanese club she was working in, after she rejected the sexual advances of the club's customers.

The good-looking Ann, who once dabbled in acting and was featured in cameo roles in some romantic movies, said she has no qualms about chatting up customers and pouring them drinks. But being fondled or worse, sexually assaulted, is another matter, she said.

"They (customers) can't do that to me. I'll beat them black and blue," said Ann, mother of a 10-year-old girl who separated from her husband 10 years ago.

"Had they told me that would be the kind of job I would have, I would never have applied in the first place," she said.

Second thoughts

Even before reading the INQUIRER series, Ann had been having second thoughts about going to Japan but could not back out of the verbal contract she had made with a Japanese lest she have to pay a $1,000 fine.

The Japanese had offered her a job as a singer at a Tokyo nightclub. Since she already had an artist's record book (ARB), she accepted the offer. She was told to leave in early March.

"Still, I felt like not going after I started having (skin) allergies. But they told me that I couldn't back out anymore or I would have to pay the penalty of $1,000," she recalled.

Ann then sought divine intervention and asked for "a sign" whether to push through with the trip. Not long afterward, her mother gave her a copy of the INQUIRER issue that had the series on sex trafficking. It was all she needed.

Ann and her mother called Carmelita Nuqui, executive director of the Development Action for Women's Network (DAWN), to consult her about the penalty. She was told she was not liable as she had not signed a contract.

The Japanese and his local contact never bothered her again.

Legitimize trafficking

The INQUIRER series was an exposé on the issuance of ARBs to legitimize the trafficking of women to Japan, and as a source of corruption for officials of the issuing agency, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda).

The ARB is issued to talents who have undergone training in singing and dancing, and passed testing procedures at accredited centers. It is the sole requirement needed to get an entertainer's visa to Japan.

Ann is not content with putting her experience behind her and moving on. She has decided to engage in "advocacy work" by convincing friends to reconsider any plans of working in Japan as singers or dancers.

She passed on the INQUIRER series to two friends and plans to distribute copies of it to others.

"I'll give them to my friends who are planning to work in Singapore. I heard Filipinas are also offered jobs there as sex workers," said Ann, who lives by herself in Los Baños, Laguna. Her daughter lives with her parents.

Suspect in Bicol murder spree falls

LEGAZPI CITY—Pawnshop receipts, a victim's diary and other evidence led police to a retired police superintendent's nephew believed responsible for a series of murders, including that of an Australian couple, here and in Ligao City.

Albay police director Senior Supt. Pedro U. Tango said Jessie Ray Otanez, alias Michael Sarmiento, of Barangay Bagumbayan, Ligao City was the principal suspect in the killing of Marilyn Jentalan and Agnes Bagalay in this city on March 7, 2002, Australian couple Augustus and Corazon Kuhle, also in this city, on Sept. 14, 2002, and nurse Ma. Isabel Juarez of St. Joseph Medical Clinic in Ligao City last March 3.

Otanez, 21, is a nephew of former Bicol deputy police chief Senior Supt. Jose Angeles Jr. (ret.).

Tango said the last entry in Kuhle's diary indicated that Sarmiento was supposed to visit the Kuhle couple in their home at the Kyama Building in this city on the day she and her husband were murdered.

Five months after the Kuhle slaying, the name Michael Sarmiento surfaced again, this time on Cebuana Lhuiller pawn tickets for Juarez's jewelry.

Other witnesses said the suspect had bragged to them about having shot and killed two women from a beauty parlor who had refused to dance with him.

Jentalan and Bagalay were employees of Farhana Skin Care and Beauty in Legazpi City.

Police found Otanez's .38-cal. revolver, a computer motherboard and other paraphernalia in a garbage pile in front of the suspect's boarding house on March 31.

Ballistic examination confirmed the slugs recovered from the heads of Corazon Kuhle and Jentalan had been fired from the gun.
Ronnie Lorejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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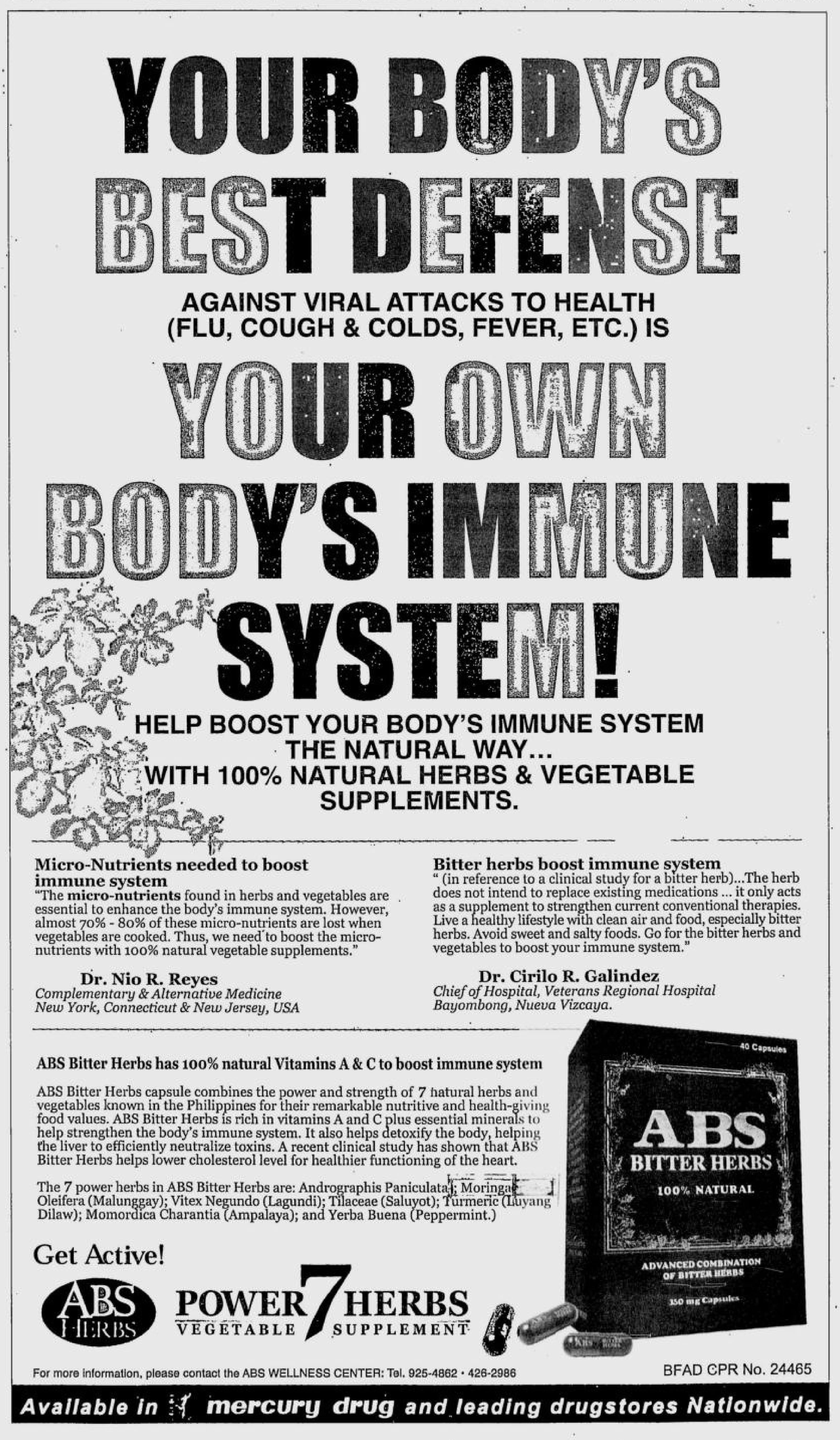

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Peace?

EDITORIAL

AT THIS time of the year, our thoughts turn to matters of the spirit. Even the public debate over state policy (such as it is) takes a less pragmatic, more ethereal turn. Yesterday, for instance, the President borrowed the language of the Christian liturgical season to put her current low popularity ratings and her steadfast support for the US-led invasion of Iraq in perspective: "We have to bear our own crosses," she said in her Palm Sunday message.

This Holy Week, however, is a particularly good time to discuss one state policy in particular: peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Is it possible to conclude a final peace agreement with the MILF before the end of the year? Let us widen the scope of our concern and ask: Is such an agreement possible during the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo?

The peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front in 1996 was a legacy of the first Lakas administration. Will successful peace talks with the MILF be the legacy of the second?

We are not optimistic.

Last April 4, the President said the government would resume formal peace talks with the MILF, the country's largest secessionist threat, but without MILF chair Salamat Hashim.

Did she mean it was possible to cut a peace deal with the MILF without the participation or consent of the rebel group's founder? We know for a fact that certain administration officials have given up on some members of the MILF as unalterably hard-core. These government officials understand the administration's peace initiatives as designed to win the approval of MILF moderates. Is the government now signaling that, in their view, Salamat has completely given up on the peace option?

The Palace will reply in expected fashion: It will say that the President merely pointed out the truth, that Salamat and 49 other rebel leaders face multiple murder charges over the Davao International Airport bombing last month. Thus, she was only following the logic of the law to its necessary conclusion.

In fact, the President did say something to that effect. "Those participating in the peace talks are issued (a) safety guarantee pass. But this does not cover common crimes," she said then. "(The) process of the law is superior over any other agreements."

Yes, of course. But why did the President feel the need to issue the reminder?

If pressed, Malacañang would likely say that Ms Macapagal's point was simple: In lieu of the Davao bombing charges, the MILF would have to name new representatives to its peace panel. That, in fact, is what she said last April 4: "What they should do is to assign representatives with no warrants of arrest."

But the MILF representatives to the latest talks—the two-day informal sessions of March 2003 held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—were chief negotiator Lanang Ali and his members Michael Mastura, Musib Buat and Mohajirin Ali.

Those talks resulted in the agreement to proceed with the peace process—a decision made necessary because of the reported massing of MILF troops in one part of the Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao and the launching of the Buliok Complex offensive by the Armed Forces last February.

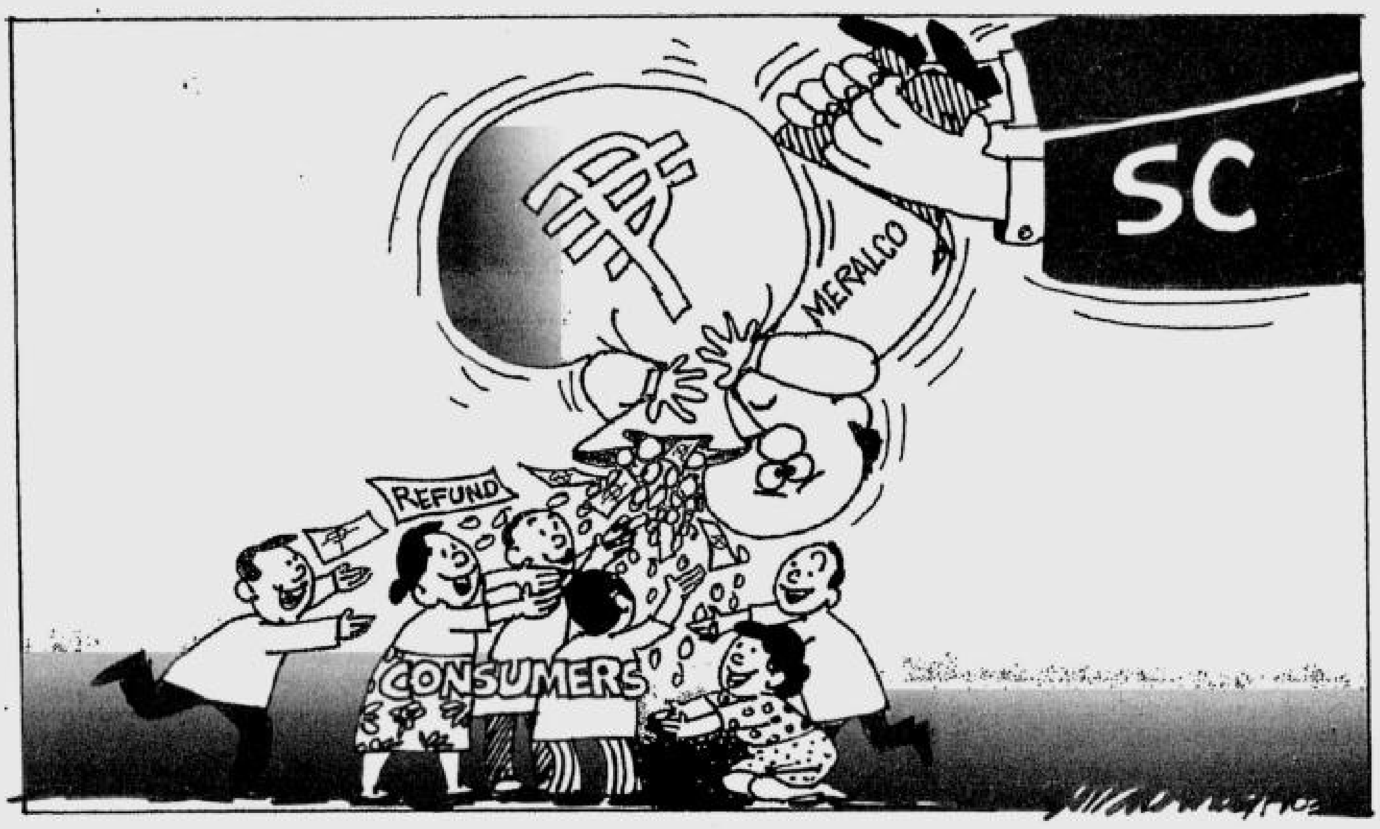
But none of these MILF peace negotiators were included in the Davao bombing charge sheet, so what in the world is the President talking about?

And since when was Salamat directly involved in the peace negotiations?

Like the dour reminder by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, issued on the same day the government negotiators announced the Kuala Lumpur breakthrough, that the AFP would still continue its pursuit operations of the MILF if the rebel group violated Philippine laws, the we-know-what-it-takes-to-be-tough statement of the President's is a gratuitous threat.

It makes us ask: Is the Macapagal administration really interested in a final peace agreement with the MILF?

If the President wants to forge a peace deal, she must learn to highlight what we share in common with the Filipinos who are members of the MILF, not the obvious sources of difference. She may not like to do it, because it may make her look weak, but as she has herself reminded us in her Palm Sunday message, all of us have our own cross to bear.



The best place to stay in during Holy Week

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE MAD rush to the resorts, vacation spots and the home provinces began last Saturday as the early birds take advantage of the whole Holy Week and the weekend before it to escape the heat and traffic of the city for the cool open space and blue skies of the countryside. The exodus will reach its peak on the afternoon of Holy Wednesday and the early hours of Holy Thursday. The crush will be at its worst at the provincial bus stations and—take note, police and civilians—they will be tempting targets for terrorists out to make a statement.

It is really a desire most coveted, to escape the pollution and cramped space of the city. To lie on the beach feeling the cool breeze from the sea, the waves lapping at your feet, and hearing the wind ruffling the palm fronds. Or picnic in the river and swim in the old waterhole with friends. Or enjoy the refreshingly cool climate of Baguio and the wind through the pines, or the white sands of Boracay or the spectacular views of Banaue and Tagaytay. (Going abroad is risky because of SARS.) Just thinking about them makes your mouth water.

But alas, it doesn't always turn out that way. As soon as you get to the North and South Expressways, you encounter tens of thousands of motorists with the same idea: leave the city for the province. The traffic is bumper to bumper and the heat is stifling as the vehicles crawl along the highways.

"Where is the open country that you are always talking about?" the perspiring children at the back ask their harried father.

"As soon as we get past this traffic jam," replies the man of the house, or rather, the vehicle.

But three hours later, they are still there, crawling foot by foot on the crowded highway. The children are on the verge of getting heat stroke. The vehicle's air conditioning conks out, the car overheats and tempers flare.

But at last, after exhausting almost half of the vacation time on the road, they reach the coveted vacation spot. But it is like a mirage. There is no wide open space, no cool breezes, no shade under a tree to relax in, no space on the beach or in the water. Instead, there are the same thousands of people one is trying to get away from in the city. They're all there ahead of you, occupying the best spots, occupying the tables at the restaurants.

"Where is the wide open space you are always talking about, Papa?" the children ask again.

If you are going to catch SARS, this is the likeliest place to get the virus.

"Avoid crowds" is the doctor's advice, for crowds transmit germs very effectively. But the crowds are thicker here than in the shopping malls. And the prices of food and drinks are double that in the malls.

So instead of having a pleasant vacation, our family couldn't wait but leave and go home. Only to find out, when they get back to the highways, that thousands of other families have the same idea. So the crawling bumper-to-bumper traffic on the way out is repeated on the way into the city.

"We never saw any wide open country, Papa," the children quip.

"There's no such thing," says the youngest. "Just another of Papa's tall tales."

"We should have gone to your lolo and lola's house instead of that resort," the mother says.

"But it is so expensive to go there," retorts the father.

"Why would it be expensive when it's free? We don't pay anything."

"Yes, but your relatives keep borrowing money from me which they never pay."

So for the rest of the way, there is angry silence inside the vehicle. They reach their house tired, hot, dirty, smelly, hungry and angry. The vacation that started out so full of promise and expectation ends in bitter disappointment. After the vacation, the vacationists are more exhausted than before they started out.

"So where do you want to go next Holy Week?" the father tries to cheer up his brood.

"Papa," chorus the children, "let's just stay home."

* * *

From the mouths of babes, come words of wisdom. Unknown to many, the best place to stay in during the Holy Week is the place they tried to escape from in the first place: Metro Manila. You'll discover a place you never dreamed possible here. Can you imagine a Metro Manila without traffic, when you can zoom from Quezon City to Makati in 20 minutes (where it used to take two hours) and to Manila in 15 minutes? Impossible? Try it on Good Friday. The streets would be almost empty of traffic. You have the streets all to yourself.

This is the opportunity to go to all the places in the metropolis you couldn't go to on ordinary days because of the traffic. This is the time to visit relatives you couldn't visit because by the time you reach their homes, it is time to head back through the same traffic gridlock. On Good Friday, without the traffic, Metro Manila is like heaven.

Where are all the vehicles choking it on other days?

Strung out on the highways, trying to escape from the city, looking for the cool wide open spaces of the countryside. Like the Fountain of Youth, they'll never find it during the Holy Week. On Good Fridays, that place is here, the place they try to escape from.

Not quite Edsa

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOMEONE asked me late last week if that scene of people crying and shouting while tearing down a statue of Saddam Hussein didn't remind me of Edsa. I said not at all.

It wasn't the same thing at all, as became patent shortly afterward. There was no doubt Saddam was a brutal dictator. There was no doubt he robbed his people of their liberties, quite apart from their wealth and their lives, and slaughtered 5,000 Kurds with poison gas. There was no doubt most Iraqis were elated that he was out of power.

But as one Arab editor put it delicately in an interview with BBC, there was a difference between people being ecstatic about having no more tyrant and people being ecstatic about having foreign troops occupying their city. The one was real, he said, the other was not. What we were seeing, he said, was a people heaving a sigh of relief. What we were not seeing, he said, was a people welcoming an occupation force. As it turned out, there would be more dramatic differences.

The next few hours swiftly soured the image of a city caught in the throes of euphoria. What the coalition forces had depicted as dancing in the streets, with no small help from the "embedded media" was in fact looting in the streets. An Iraqi correspondent of Democracy Now wrote angrily: "Those people that you see on the streets are the people of 'Althowra City,' or as they call it sometimes 'Saddam City.' As you can see, they are not only dancing, they are looting, robbing stores, stealing cars, burning places. These were the same people who used to appear on TV clapping for Saddam. Believe whatever you want, but do not call them 'the people of Iraq.' The people of Iraq are not in the streets because they are afraid of those maniacs."

An AFP report written by Sammy Ketz confirmed the extent of the mayhem. Hospitals themselves, and not just stores, became fair game. "Twenty-five people were admitted to Baghdad's Al-Kindi hospital after suffering gunshot wounds in clashes during the looting. But the hospital, Baghdad's largest, can provide little help as it has been looted itself.

"'The situation is chaotic and catastrophic,' Peter Tarabula, medical coordinator for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said after an ICRC team inspected the hospital. All staff have fled Al-Kindi hospital except for two doctors who administer first aid but do not carry out operations. Few patients have remained in the hospital since the looting on Thursday, in which armed men stole two ambulances and medicines from the facility. 'The thieves and vandals come from Saddam City,' the million-strong Shi'ite slum on the capital's northern outskirts, said Mohammad as-Safa, who runs and Arab fast-food restaurant."

Edsa was not that at all. But a bigger gap yawns in this: Edsa saw a people overthrow a tyrant on their own, the invasion of Iraq saw a people bombed and shot at for their own good. A people who liberate themselves know not just what they are liberating themselves from but what they are liberating themselves *for*. A people who are "liberated" by others—and worse, unwillingly—do not.

The doctrine of "regime change," which was practiced in Afghanistan before it was articulated as such with Iraq, is a pernicious one. I said it even then, when the justification for the war on Afghanistan shifted from punishing Osama bin Laden to ousting a brutal Taliban regime. And was sold that way by the media later on, in pictures of Kabul not unlike the ones of Baghdad that appeared on CNN last Wednesday. No country has the right to dictate its will on another country. Least of all one like the United States, whose record of supporting tyrants, and indeed ushering "regime change" in perfectly democratic ones, such as the Philippines and Chile in the early 1970s, is a long one.

While at that, US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone's remark last month that the US effort to oust Saddam was like its effort to oust Marcos is infuriating not just because it is wrong but that it is also right. It is wrong in that, as many incensed local commentators pointed out, it is shameless credit-grabbing. But it is also right in that Marcos, like Saddam, was openly supported by the United States before he outlived his usefulness and fell into disfavor. Until Saddam defied the United States, he was being supplied with arms by American firms to butcher Iranians whose crime was to have ousted a tyrant in the person of the Shah. If the United States hadn't propped up these regimes in the first place, it wouldn't have needed to change them.

The doctrine of regime change does not push the world to the 21st century, it throws it back to the 19th. Regime change is just the 21st-century equivalent of the 19th-century White Man's Burden, the right of the powerful to Christianize and civilize savages and unbelievers. Lest we forget, that was the justification for the seizure of the Philippines in 1899. The United States went to war against Spain for the express purpose of liberating Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from the tyrannical clutches of Spain. There was no doubt about the brutality of Spanish rule, least of all in the minds of Filipinos who lost their chief exponent by a Spanish firing squad at the Luneta. But there was every doubt about the nature of the liberation. Doubts that were soon dispelled in Samar, most of whose inhabitants were liberated from their mortal shells.

As Afghanistan shows, democracy is the last thing to grow from such seeds. Two years later, it's not just back to being dirt-poor and benighted, it's back to seeing the first stirrings of an Islamic fundamentalist revival.

The "liberation of Baghdad" is another Edsa? To paraphrase Yasmin, believe whatever you want but do not call it that. It's everything-but Edsa.

* * *

Comments to dequiros@info.com.ph

Roco and his commencement speech campaigns

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

WITH THE HIGH profile of several politicians eyeing the 2004 elections, many people are asking where Sen. Raul Roco is, as he has been so quiet. At the birthday gathering for former President Ramos the other week, Roco showed up, and to my query as to what he has been up to, he said with a big grin that between now and the end of May he has more than 70 commencement addresses to make around the country, while his wife Sonia has about 30 of her own. Roco noted that those commencement addresses enable him to reach many thousands of people. There's no denying that his principal bailiwick is the vast student population—and their relatives.

* * *

My Tokyo-based daughter Christine attended the luncheon talk last week by former President Ramos at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan before an audience of journalists, diplomats, investment industry professionals and former Japanese ambassadors to the Philippines. She reported how FVR impressed the audience with his discourse on the Iraq war and the US participation in the campaign against Muslim insurgents in Mindanao. He ended with the observation that the unification of the Korean peninsula and the resulting decline of US presence in the Northeast Asian region, due to the resumption of "normal state" status for Japan, was a real long-term possibility for the region. The United States, said FVR, will have to seek "new ways of asserting its influence," and American security involvement will have to be "transformed both in form and substance," emphasizing increasingly the political rather than the military function of its alliance structure.

* * *

But Christine reported that what charmed the audience most were the former chief executive's candid responses to questions from Keiichi Miki, president and CEO of JP Morgan Chase in Japan, on his assessment of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the 2004 elections. In reply, FVR recalled that during the Caltex Golf Celebrity Challenge tournament in Singapore last year, a reporter asked him how his golf game went, and he replied, "Better than others." Then the reporter asked, "How's the Philippine economy doing?" to which FVR answered, "Better than others." He then asked him, "How is Ms Arroyo as president?" and FVR said, "Better than all the others." Christine reported that the Japanese audience laughed, and FVR continued about how someone else asked him at that golf tournament, "Mr. Ramos, what is your handicap?" Said FVR: "I looked him straight in the eye and said, 'My handicap is the Philippine Constitution.'"

FVR was doubtless referring to the attempt by his followers to campaign for the lifting of the constitutional limitation on the presidential term during his watch, and to periodic rumors that he plans to run again for president, except that his eligibility to do so has been challenged in the Supreme Court, where it still lodges.

* * *

A news item said that the Philippine National Police, anticipating the eventual arrest of most suspects in the May 1995 Kuratong Baleleng case, including Sen. Panfilo Lacson, has readied three detention places for them. The plan is to split them up into three groups, with Lacson and his close aides to be detained in the PNP Special Action Force training school in Fort Sto. Domingo, Sta: Rosa, Laguna while the two other groups will be detained at Camp Crame. Arrest and detention will be Lacson's fate once the warrant is handed down, but as the chief of the Supreme Court's communications, lawyer Ismael Khan revealed at a dzRH program co-hosted by this columnist and Cecile Alvarez recently, this may or may not happen soon, depending on a number of factors.

* * *

Khan revealed that per the April 1 ruling of the SC, a new preliminary investigation is required in the 11 KB cases to be reopened, if certain conditions have changed, e.g., if new witnesses for the state have emerged or if the criminal liability of the accused is upgraded from accessory to principal. In the KB cases, new witnesses have come out and Lacson has become a principal accused.

Khan also explained that if QC RTC Branch 81 presiding Judge Ma. Teresa Yadao rules that there is no probable cause in these cases, then they will not proceed; moreover, no appeal is permitted in cases that have been originally dismissed and reopened. But of course, if Yadao finds probable cause, an arrest order for Lacson will have to be issued, and the prosecutors are confident they have a tight case.

* * *

Moreover, Khan explained that since the SC decision specifically ordered RTC Branch 81 to proceed with the cases, if Chief Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño makes good his desire, as speculated by the media, to petition for the raffle of the KB cases on the ground of suspected partiality of Judge Yadao to Lacson, she herself may have to seek the SC's permission to give them up. Assuming she intends to do so, which Khan doubts. What struck me as we discussed the KB cases with Khan is the awesome weight of the judicial burden on Judge Yadao's shoulders, given the political significance of Lacson's case.

* * *

For those wanting to heed the admonition of the Catholic bishops about "switching channels" away from more mundane issues this week, they are invited to attend the Holy Week recollection to be conducted by the well-known former Rome-based biblical scholar, Fr. Rene Lopez, SSL, at the Chapel of St. Camillus, Our Lady of Pentecost Parish, at 18 N. Reyes, Loyola Heights, QC. from Holy Thursday, April 17 to Holy Saturday, April 19, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. With the theme, "Seeking a Christ-centered Holiness," Father Lopez's talk for April 17 will be on "Jesus, The Face of God" according to evangelists Mark, Luke and John; April 18, "The life of Jesus: Temptations and Struggle," and April 19, "The Passion, Death and Resurrection."

Those four farmers in Indanan

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyn Mustafa

LAST March 22, the headless bodies of four farmers—Radjail Mukammali, 68; Almajur Jainul, 21; Bin Nasser Muammil, 13; and Jul Sahibul, 17—were found covered with leaves and dried wood in Sitio Lampaki, Cabbun Maas in Indanan town a day after a survivor, Ansajul Ayyadi, reported the attack to the authorities.

In his sworn statement Ayyadi claimed that the perpetrators were government soldiers. This was reportedly corroborated by eyewitnesses who saw Scout Rangers in the area on the day the beheadings took place.

The victims were relatives of Moro National Liberation Front members who had been integrated into the Philippine Army under the 35th Infantry Battalion. One of them was a close relative of Gov. Yusop Jikiri.

According to Ayyadi, they were made to take off their clothes, which were used to blindfold them and to tie their hands at the back. They were questioned about "(their) Abu Sayyaf companions" and then they were beaten with rifle butts and made to kneel down.

And then one by one, they were beheaded. Ayyadi sustained a hack wound on the neck which did not go deep enough to sever his head and he survived by playing dead.

In a recent interview, Rep. Hussin U. Amin of Sulu's first district said he was filing a resolution calling for a full congressional investigation of the incident.

Temojen "Cocoy" Tulawie who heads the Concerned Citizens of Sulu that had been documenting military abuses in the province, said that although the 104th Army Brigade in the province is conducting its own investigation, they are requesting "an independent body" as well as the PNP and the Marines stationed in Indanan to conduct their own investigations.

"The investigation should be impartial. If the military is responsible, this is proof that they don't want the conflict to end," Tulawie said, adding that "there are even those who are thinking of taking up arms against the government," even as he admitted that "not all in the military think this way."

"The world should know our fate here," Tulawie said. "We are being killed day and night by some soldiers."

Governor Jikiri in calling for a "thorough investigation," lamented the fact that "since time immemorial our race have always been the victims."

He said that while it was "premature" to make any conclusions as to the perpetrators of the killings, Jikiri said the fact that there is a survivor and that there are eyewitnesses should make it easier for the government to get at the truth and bring the guilty to justice.

There are many other cases that Tulawie's group has document, just as gruesome, senseless and cruel. The only difference is that in this latest incident there is a survivor; there are eyewitness.

The relatives of the victims and all the countless others reportedly killed by uniformed men are crying for justice. None have even been investigated.

One of the many lessons that could be learned from the war in Iraq is the importance of "winning the hearts and minds" of the populace. This is especially true in situations, as in Iraq and in Sulu, where the military has to conduct operations in a land where the people are of a different faith, a different culture and speak a different language.

Having the people on their side will not only eliminate hostile attitudes, but can actually help in such vital aspects as providing intelligence.

From the sad record of summary executions and other wrongdoings allegedly perpetrated by the military in Sulu and in Mindanao, it should not be a cause for surprise, and certainly not of endless political and academic discussions, as to why the "Mindanao problem" or "Moro problem" is a saga without end.

Many of those who expressed negative reactions to the holding of the Balikatan exercises in the province based their attitude on the conduct of the military operating in the province, while on the other hand those who favored the coming of US troops had, rather inversely, the same reason: maybe only the Americans can finally bring peace to Sulu without inflicting the same cruelty on the civilians.

For every summary execution, for every unwarranted arrest, for every mosque defiled, for every home razed, for every piece of property they divest from the people, is another wedge that widens the gap and alienates the Muslim populace from the government.

In his speech on his oathtaking as the new chief of staff only a few days ago, Gen. Narciso Abaya vowed that this country will never be "dismembered" during his watch.

Well, with due respect, it is, I'm afraid, already dismembered. It has been, for long. Maybe not in actuality as we know it, but in the hearts and minds of the Muslims in this country.

It is his task now, at least during his watch, no matter how daunting, to try to put his own piece, no matter how small, to mend it.

And one step toward this would be to order a full, thorough and impartial investigation of the murder of those four farmers of Indanan, as soon as possible.

But such investigation should not fall the way of similar such investigations. It should be prosecuted to its logical end—the guilty brought to justice and made to pay for their crime.

This may not be a big leap; it certainly will not put severed heads back on their bodies, but it will be one meaningful legacy of Abaya's tenure as the highest-ranking military official now.

* * *

Comments to nm19@my.smart.com.ph

GMA topples golden calf of cheap popularity

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

THE SOCIAL Weather Stations survey says 48 percent not satisfied, 34 percent satisfied, on the President's performance, or negative 14 percent plus or minus 18 percent undecided is GMA's Net Satisfaction Rating. After defying the Pope and lesser heresiarchs for allying with the Great Satan; enduring months of antiwar mobilization by Vice President Guingona, with weekly occupation of the Luneta grandstand by cults of resentment; taking vilification as the *tuta ng Kano* by elite armies of bomb-mongering victimhood in media and academe; hearing a deafening, self-preserving silence from most everyone but the Anglosphere; minus 14 percent plus or minus a war of liberation in Iraq, let crustaceans tremble in their shells.

Pitiless oligarchs of media whipped up doomsday hysteria with wild ululations of fear-mongering fiction. "Millions to die in war, 90 percent civilians. Oil to $100 a barrel. Peso to 100 to $1. Two million OFWs to flee as refugees. Philippine economy in shambles. Dow Jones to crash to 1,000. Arab resentment. 100 new Saddams. 1,000 more Bin Ladens, a million Abus. Chaos and Armageddon." Scary-angry fairy tales believed by gullible anchor boys and girls are the mental SARS viruses that panic the republic.

The quick crumbling of Saddam's Tower of Babel does not befuddle our Cassandras. They claim it's the sheer heartless cruelty of the US weaponry and military that explains why there is absolutely no sustained, sincere, credible, genuine patriotic resistance of any visible kind from the vast majority of ordinary Iraqi citizens. Regular Iraqi army troops, whose fathers once battled the Persians for eight years, not lacking valor or patriotism, once the B'aathists flee, throw down their uniforms and weapons with glee, to become themselves Iraqis yearning to be free, to share grace and MREs with same-age Jessicas and Menusas and Tommies, who like them would rather make love not war tonight, on a more tender battlefield. Occam's Razor and Al-Jazeera give the lie to the charges of unjust war, even more than joyous crowds and statue-muggings. You can deny the facts, but not their consequences. Iraqis will play in the NBA.

Still, resenters of democracy darkly proclaim worse things to come, not better. Amid the chaos of war and the pathos of the dead and dying, statues of Saddam Hussein were toppled by angry, hungry, grieving, thieving, clueless, bleeding, fearing, joyful crowds of human beings in Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul. One statue's severed head was an iron steed for a Baghdad youth taunting the smashed remains of Saddam idolatry. But Iraqis will hate Britney and MTV and KFC, the fedayeen gripe sourly, since the United Nations did not approve it. Desperate searches for Iraqi *desaparecidos* of a quarter century gulag began with the help of the Royal Dragoon Guards. Under Saddam's golden palatial seraglios, they found cold gravel. And the worst WMD of all is missing. But a flower grows in Babylon transplanted from the Garden of Eden by POW Joseph Hudson. Let it not die or be tortured with him. Let it be found with him, safe and fragile. Bring him a Jollibee and freedom fries and Sarsi, and for all his honorable captors and their born-again nation.

All this depresses Cold War nostalgians who demand allegiance to the UN Security Council's dysfunctional oligarchy. They insist that only the UN can legitimize a post-war Iraq, not a government of Iraqis, for Iraqis, by Iraqis recognized by our democracies. But why should unstable African governments in Angola, Cameroon and Guinea hold one-fifth the power of the world in the Security Council, equal to the share of America, Britain and France, or Japan, Russia and China on the question say of North Korea? And this be named "morally legitimate international consensus," not insanity?

But here's Jacques Chirac, willing to toast coalition military victories in Iraq with Comrade Putin and Herr Schroeder at St. Petersburg last Friday: "France, like all democracies, rejoices." *Sacre bleu! Balimbing Françoise.* But if they really want to help, Paul Wolfowitz says that France, Germany and Russia should condone billions of dollars in sovereign debt that Saddam got from them.

Good idea. Perhaps a leading presidential candidate should campaign to have our own Bataan Nuclear Power Plant debt condoned. At $2 billion, it is the single biggest piece of the sovereign debt, our nuclear albatross most odious in Morong, (which was fixed for Marcos and Westinghouse by some who abandoned a great man to illegal detention, later to die at an airport tarmac, payment in full for our present liberty to forget).

Gloria has paid the price of unpopularity for statesmanship. Our President has become a figure in history, not mere politics. We should defend her person and her office with our lives and our honor. The Philippine republic stands with the world's greatest democracies in a perilous enterprise to remake the world after Sept. 11. I say it is immoral to obstruct this vision of a universally democratic world with dead ideologies, and inhuman to deny the evolution of nationalities into one human race with inalienable rights and duties as members of the species.

Gloria has toppled the golden calf of cheap popularity. She scorns the very thing of political blackmail thrust upon her by Edsa revolution cum Erap revulsion. She has outclassed the competition, who are eerily shocked and awed at the vast territories she has laid out, for all who are sitting on the fence, biding their time, waiting to spring, like jackals or lambs or heroes.

* * *

Comments to deanjbocobo@yahoo.com

Intimidating letters

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

IT'S the second day of the Holy Week and things have started to slow down before they virtually grind to a halt on Good Friday. My incoming mail appears to be on a holiday mood also. Looks like the readers have decided to give the newspaper staff a break from their usual scrutiny and criticisms. Bless their souls.

For a change, I'd like to write about the interesting behavior of some readers who write letters to the editor to express their thoughts on current issues or the events happening around us. Although I have repeatedly reminded the readers that their letters or e-mail should be sent directly to the editor in chief or editor of the Opinion section, many continue to send them to me with the request that I forward them to the proper parties.

I do not mind being a messenger of sorts since the editorial office is only a floor up and I can use the exercise. And for e-mail, it's just a matter of pointing the cursor to the "forward" note and, with a flick of a finger, send it to the electronic mailbox of the Opinion staff. Except that coursing it to me adds one more layer to the process and delays the publication of the letters, assuming they meet the standards of relevancy, good grammar and allowable length.

By and large, the letters to the editor that have crossed my desk were well written and showed the writers' sincerity in expressing their comments on the subject of their letters. Once in a while I get letters that are bitchy, meaning, they use four-letter words and cuss phrases that would make my English professor shake her head with dismay. To save myself and the Opinion editor from further aggravation, I throw these kind of letters to the wastebasket after reading them.

Challenge

The letters that amuse me most are those I call "dare to print" letters. The letter writers fancy themselves as holding opinions or views that are different from the Inquirer's agenda. They challenge the newspaper to print their letters to prove to the readers that "it welcomes opposing views," or "it faithfully adheres to its slogan of 'balanced news, fearless views,'" or "it believes the truth shall set us free."

If the newspaper does not publish their letters or, if it does, edits them, it only shows that the Inquirer is biased and therefore undeserving of the public's trust. For these writers, the measure of the newspaper's worth is its willingness to publish all the letters it receives regardless of their quality or sense.

Once, I got a letter that used the words "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" in its opening lines. I had a hunch the writer was a lawyer because that phrase is classic legalese. I expected to read a thought-provoking letter worthy of publication. Instead, the letter was a mini version of a pleading filed in court filled with obsolete legal gobbledygook that even lawyers do not enjoy reading.

There was this letter-writer who struck me as a rabid fan of former President Joseph Estrada. He said in his covering note that his letter was meant to "counterbalance the Inquirer's anti-Erap policy before, during and after his presidency." He warned that if his letter was not published exactly the way he submitted it within 48 hours from its receipt, he would lead a nationwide campaign to boycott the Inquirer.

The accompanying letter consisted of seven pages, single-spaced, with photos to boot. The editorial text alone would have occupied two-thirds of a page, or the equivalent of three columnists' articles. The maximum acceptable letter length is two and a half pages, regular size-bond paper, double spaced. Or about 3,000 or less, characters on the computer.

I sent the letter to the Opinion staff. I was not surprised it did not see print. Neither did I get another letter from the writer informing me about the organization of his boycott movement.

Standards

There was also this letter of a Filipino-American who, at the height of last year's discussion on whether American soldiers should be allowed to engage in combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf, demanded that his 12-page treatise on the "noble objectives of American security policies" be published by the Inquirer.

In his words, the article would "clarify the misconceptions and inaccuracies about the proposed war exercises with the United States that the Inquirer has consistently written about." He believed that by publishing his research on that issue the newspaper would be able to prove to the whole world that it is not anti-American and that it lives up to the standards of US newspapers.

I was tempted to write him back to refute his gratuitous statements. But I decided against it because, judging from the tone of his letter, I felt he had already made up his mind about the Inquirer and that for him Mother America could do no wrong.

Somehow, I have a feeling these letter-writers send their masterpieces to all the broadsheets. On a number of occasions, I've seen the name of the Inquirer typewritten over a word that had white paint on it, or what is commonly known as "snowpake." This means something was originally written on that particular portion of the page.

There was this letter that mentioned the newspaper's name three times on the first page. On the last page, the name of another newspaper appeared on the portion that was supposed to refer to the Inquirer. Apparently, the writer was not very diligent in editing the letter he sent to the Inquirer.

This letter went straight to the paper recycling bin. Not because the Inquirer was not its original addressee, but because it failed to meet the criteria for publication. I can just imagine how many trees were cut to meet the paper requirements of that letter.

Word of advice to letter-writers: Intimidating or threatening words do not figure in the newspaper's determination of what letters to publish. In fact, those words tend to invite negative or adverse reaction. If the letter is grammatically correct, relevant and within the allowable limits, it stands a good chance of publication.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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Always under question

THE LEGITIMACY of the war on Iraq will always be under question. Despite the clamor and the protest against it, war was waged. Indeed, Saddam Hussein is evil but was war necessary, causing the destruction of a nation, the killing and wounding of innocent civilians?

The irony is that the engaging state parties are members of the United Nations and that the charter which they vowed to recognize and follow contains guiding principles to refrain from the use of force, to respect the sovereign equality and territorial integrity and independence of any state. The whole justification to engage in war was the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction but war is about to end and weapons of mass destruction are yet to be found. It is a pitiful sight shown on TV—the endless bombing of cities and the fleeing civilians. The superiority and dominance of the coalition forces over the local force. Surely, there were people in the streets welcoming the soldiers as liberators but what is more evident is anarchy and the sight of people looting.

A nation is broken, wiped off the face of the earth with only the promise to reconstruct. Billions of dollars were spent in the conduct of war and more money will be spent for rehabilitation. And yet, impoverished countries sinking in poverty and people starving desperately need funds to alleviate their sorry condition. Their condition will forever be the same because war is a priority. It is indeed an imperfect world.

—RAUL I. GOCO,
8/F Strata 2000,
Emerald Avenue,
Ortigas, Pasig City

Bold steps to keep SARS out

LAST April 9, 2003, it was announced by CNN that Malaysia would not allow entry or grant visas to anyone coming from China, except businessmen who had the required health clearances.

Why is it that Malaysia can take big bold steps, be it with regard to its currency or public health? Will we have more to gain or to lose by allowing tourists from the center of the SARS outbreak to come and perhaps infect us before we take drastic steps to protect ourselves?

Will the revenue they bring in offset any outbreak of SARS or an epidemic in our midst? Will our tourism officials be ready to care for the SARS victims themselves? Does anybody have any idea of the money that will be needed to cope with an outbreak? Can our politicians get from their pork barrel what will be needed to buy the equipment to prepare the country for a possible outbreak? Why was Speaker Jose de Venecia asked by his peers to go on voluntary quarantine while tourists are allowed to mingle with the rest of us?

—LINA A. SANTIAGO,
27 Mercury St.,
Bel-Air, Makati City

Makati's permanent traffic scheme

IN ARGUING for the adoption of the 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. "window" for vehicles in Makati, Jorge Ezra Bocobo cited the ease with which he could travel from Estrella to Legaspi Village, Palanan to Greenbelt and City Hall to Palanan on any given day after 10 a.m. (Letters, 4/5/03)

As the readers probably know, the Makati City Council recently adopted a Makati Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (MUVVRP). This means that the number-coding scheme in Makati is now permanent, and will not be affected by any future decision of the Metro Manila Development Authority on the fate of the UVVRP.

Apparently, Bocobo fails to appreciate or realize the positive impact of the number-coding scheme on the traffic situation in the city. Traffic may not be horrendous in Makati during those hours precisely because the scheme has managed to cut down the volume of vehicles by 20 percent, or roughly 60,000 vehicles going in and out of the Central Business District (CBD) on any given day.

Still, as any motorist in Makati will tell you, traffic is so unpredictable in the city, as in most cities in Metro Manila, that one is hard put to accept as gospel truth the results of Bocobo's timed travels.

Agreeing to the 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. window would mean opening Makati to as many as 60,000 additional vehicles a day. And designating certain streets exempt from the UVVRP to allow motorists to reach Edsa, C-5 and the South Superhighway (exempted by the City Council from the Makati UVVRP) would clog traffic in these streets during non-peak hours.

If we did this, Bocobo's travels to various parts of Makati would not be as breezy as he said in his letter.

—JOSELITO SALGADO,
officer in charge,
Information and Community Relations,
Makati City

Administrator, not owner

AN INQUIRER news report (3/31/03, P. B1) said that Eduardo Cojuangco is again attempting to negotiate shares in San Miguel Corp. (SMC). We are amazed to learn that Cojuangco is offering to buy back the 27 percent government sequestered assets in SMC from the government. By offering a buy-back scheme, he is trying to portray himself as merely trying to reacquire a former possession which is not only inaccurate but also ridiculous. The scheme is clever but misleads the public into believing that Cojuangco is the former owner of the SMC sequestered shares.

May we remind Cojuangco that the Court has never issued a ruling or an opinion that designates him as owner of the 27-percent SMC shares, or even the 20-percent SMC shares that he lays claim to. On the contrary, the Supreme Court has ruled that the shares in SMC, which were acquired through the use of coco levy funds, are prima facie public funds.

As things stand, Cojuangco is merely the administrator of a profitable corporation that is practically owned by the government and the small farmers by virtue of their majority stockholder status.

Apparently, Cojuangco's offer is an attempt to revive the compromise deal. Under that deal, Cojuangco is allowed to buy the shares that he lays claim to. More importantly, the compromise agreement absolves him from all the cases filed against him in the courts. In other words, if Cojuangco manages to close the deal, he attains full control of the country's crown jewel and also gets to clear his name.

But despite the delay in the issuance of the Sandiganbayan's final ruling on the coco levy issue, our small coconut farmers are more inclined to wait for the ruling rather than enter into any compromise agreement.

Those who are contemplating the possible uses of the coco levy funds should be aware that the courts have already issued a ruling that the coco levy funds will be used solely for the rehabilitation of the coconut industry and for the intended beneficiaries, i.e. the small coconut farmers. At this point, any scheme or design that pertains to the coco levy remains irrelevant until the final ruling is handed down by the Sandiganbayan.

—OMI ROYANDOYAN,
Philippine Peasant Institute,
philpeasant@pacific.net.ph

Absentee voting needed

THIS concerns Blanche S. Rivera's article (PDI, 4/8/03) on whether there would be absentee voting in the 2004 elections. It may not take place because, according to the article, implementing absentee voting will cost P1 billion and Congress has allocated only P400 million for the item. This subject is very close to my heart, as one of the millions who have been directly affected by the continuing delay in the implementation of the absentee voting law.

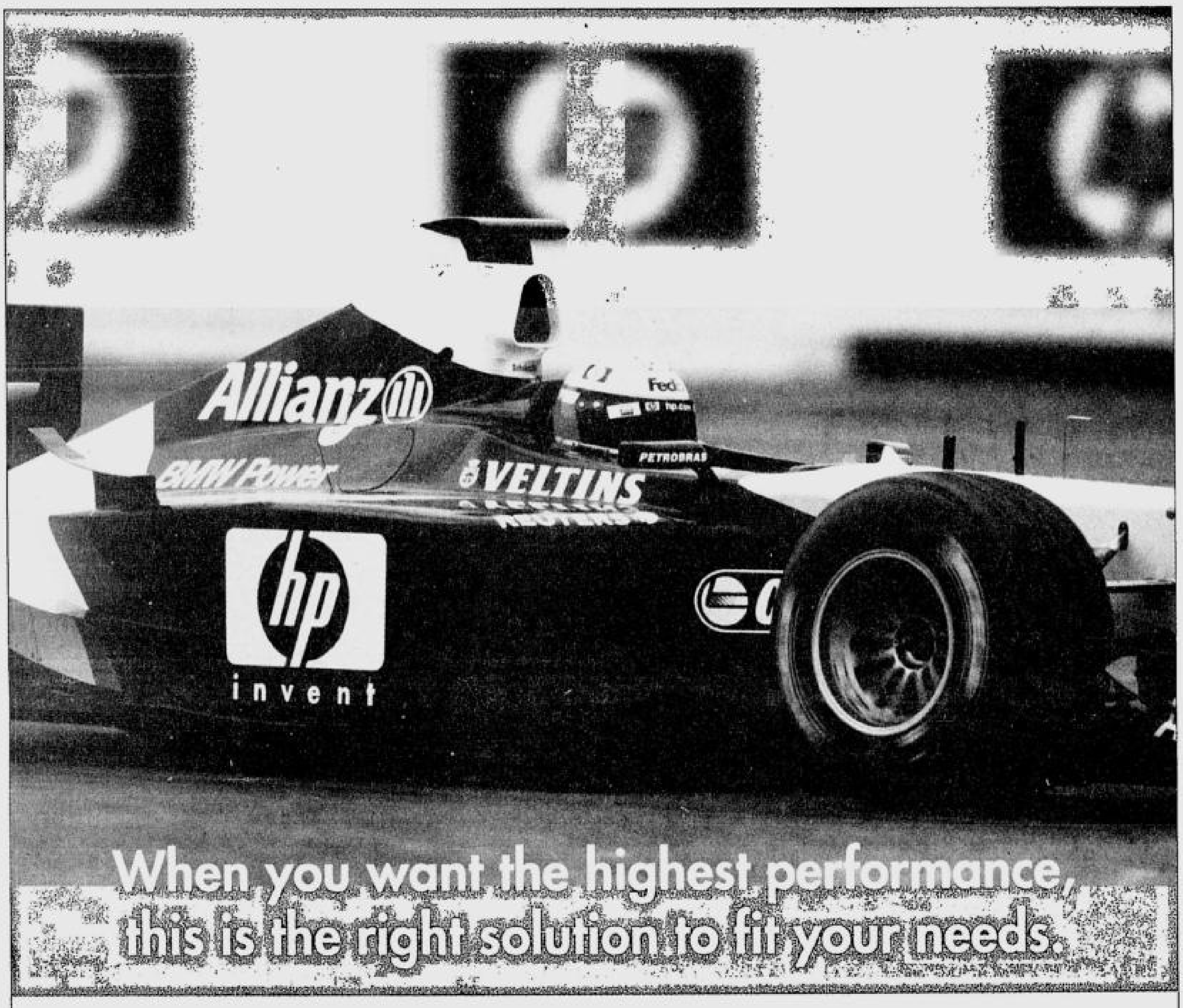
My personal interest goes back to 1969-1970, when I served as president of the Philippine-New York Jaycees (a part of the United States Jaycees), and one of our main projects during my term was to promote the adoption of absentee voting in the Philippines.

What is important is that there is now a law calling for absentee voting, and, as Namfrel chair Jose Concepcion Jr. pointed out in an article, "You cannot scrap absentee voting just like that; there is a law."

I fully endorse Namfrel's proposals, as cited in the article, to have the private sector involved in ensuring that absentee voting becomes an effective reality without further delay. If the government really cannot come up with the required funds to finance the implementation of absentee voting, why not call on the non-governmental sector to pitch in? I am certain millions of other Filipinos abroad would gladly contribute to a special fund that will be set up for this purpose.

I would like to close by posing the following question: How can our politicians and government officials be so creative and energetic in allegedly stealing billions of pesos a year from the country—the equivalent of $48 billion from 1977 to 1997 alone (according to the fine book "Investigating Corruption: A Do-It-Yourself Guide" edited by Sheila S. Coronel and Lorna Kalaw Tirol)—and at the same time be unable to come up with the relatively measly amount of P1 billion (less than $18 million) to allow millions of Filipinos overseas to finally exercise their sacred right to vote? Although we are in different foreign shores, we love our home country and, like our *kababayan* in the Philippines, we would like to be given the means to have a say on who should run it. Only absentee voting will give us the means.

—LEOCADIO F. DIOSO, New York, USA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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Protests unsilenced by Saddam's fall

WASHINGTON—Hundreds of thousands of opponents of the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq held new anti-war protests Saturday across Europe and the Americas, arguing that the regime's collapse was no reason to let up the pressure.

At least 10,000 people protested noisily in central Washington, warning that the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime was just the start of an "endless war" for world domination.

"We're not there (in Iraq) for democracy," said Edward Wolfe, 75. "We're not there for liberation. I honestly think we're there for power."

"This is not about liberation, it's about the occupation of Iraq and the plundering of its natural resources," said Dustin Langley, a volunteer with Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, which organized the protest.

"We're calling to stop this series of endless wars, to stop this occupation of Iraq and the Middle East." Peace activists demonstrated in some 45 cities and towns across Canada on Saturday in actions ranging from a thousands-strong march to army headquarters in Montreal to an arts festival in the largest city, Toronto.

Five demonstrators were arrested when a 2,000-strong crowd of protesters clashed with military police in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Downtown Mexico City was clogged by 10,000 marchers chanting, "We don't want war, we want peace."

Possibly the biggest European showing was half a million protesters on the streets of Rome, according to organizers, while a similar number turned out across Spain.

In central Washington thousands gathered to blast the US toppling of Iraq's Saddam Hussein as the first in a series of occupation wars.

In London, tens of thousands rallied even as the first British troops were set to pull out of the Gulf...

STOP WAR!
STOP VIOLENCE!
Save Our ...
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INDONESIAN divers hold an anti-war banner inside a huge aquarium at Seaworld in Jakarta, April 13.

AFP

"It is clear the war is not over," said Andrew Murray, chair of Britain's Stop the War Coalition. "There are still people being killed and we will also emphasize our opposition to occupation."

In Paris, more than 10,000 rallied behind a banner: "Iraq to the Iraqis."

In Rome, crowds swelled to half a million according to unofficial estimates.

"The war is over in its most obvious form as a classic means of destruction," said Fausto Bertinotti, Secretary General of Italy's Refounded Communist Party (PRC).

"But it continues as low intensity conflict and a strategic hypothesis of world domination by means of preventive war as conceived by (US President George W.) Bush."

Italian pacifists with banners reading: "Stop Esso war," demonstrated peacefully at gas stations of the American ExxonMobil oil group in protest at it getting a $48 million-contract to supply fuel to US military in Iraq.

One told Italian television: "We're glad the Saddam Hussein regime has fallen, but it wasn't necessary to impose this conflict and this humiliation on the Iraqis."

In Florence, three parties in Italy's government coalition paraded in support of US policy in line with government support for Washington, with banners reading: "The French are cowards."

France has strongly opposed intervention in Iraq.

In Paris, banners read: "Stop the occupation of Iraq" and "Yes to a democratic and independent Iraq." Protesters chanted "US go home!"

"We're very glad to be rid of Saddam, but we don't trust the Americans," said Mazin Yassine from Baghdad: ". . . We don't want a new dictator."

Three men were arrested for possessing anti-Semitic placards inciting to racial hatred, police said.

In the Spanish city of Barcelona, more than 200,000 people turned out.

They chanted "Aznar resign!" in protest at Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar's support for the American line on Iraq despite its rejection by the vast majority of the Spanish public. *AFP*

Iraq war tough on US foot soldiers' wives

OCEANSIDE, California—As US troops battle remnants of Iraq's fallen regime, their wives are locked in a bitter struggle against money woes that have forced some to resort to charity handouts to survive.

Low military salaries and the high cost of living in parts of the United States means that families of many of the lower-ranking US troops fighting in Iraq live a hand-to-mouth existence.

"I know several wives of Marines with small children who line up at churches for grocery handouts which are the only way they can survive the month and feed and cloth the baby," said military wife, Natalie Castro, 19.

"Military salaries are so low that they are almost impossible for a family to live on, leaving some women desperate, especially now when we also have the emotional turmoil of worrying if our men are safe in Iraq," she said.

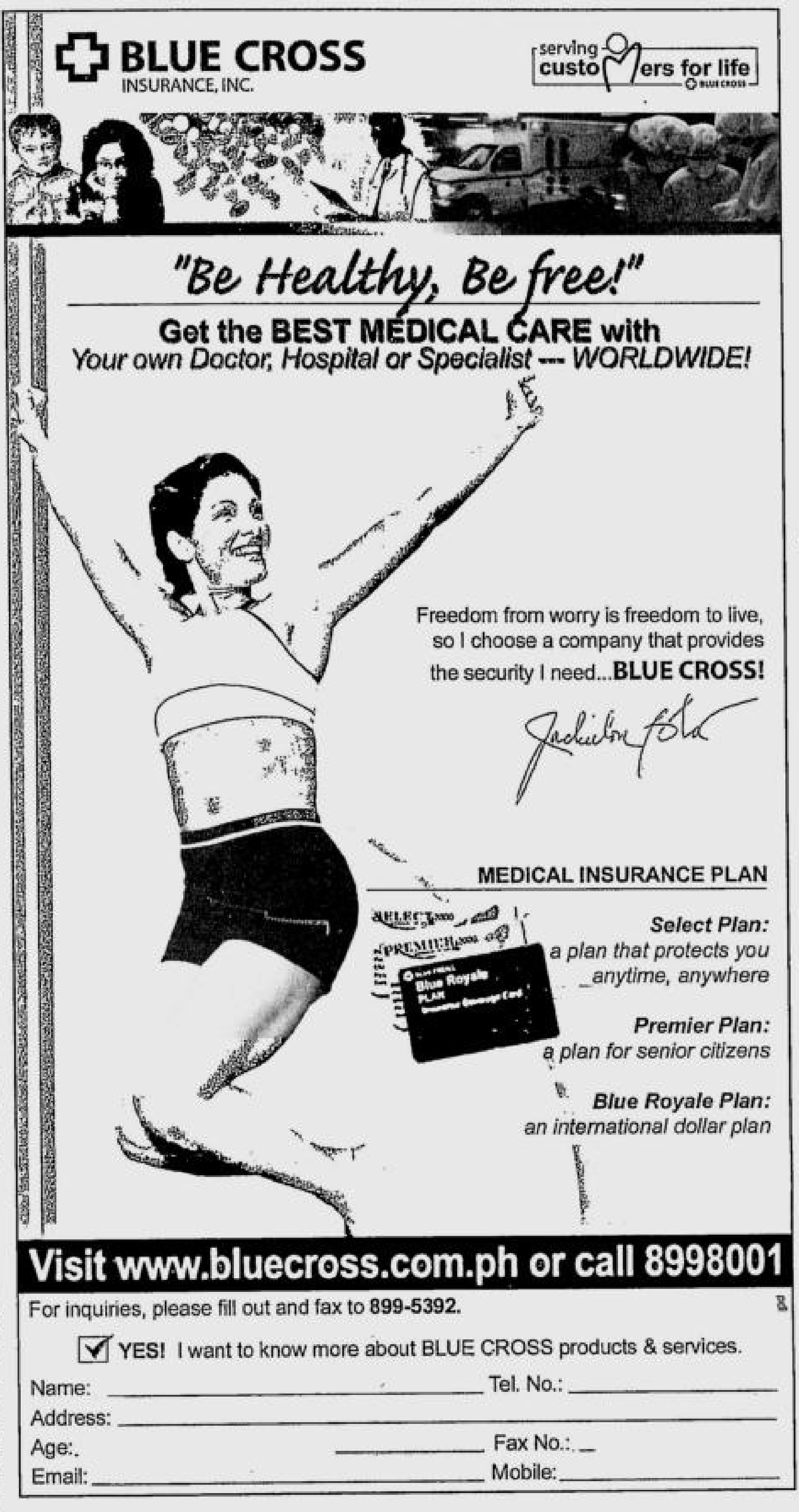
Low-ranking privates and corporals—they make up 60 percent of the US Marine Corps—take home only around $800 a month after tax, or $9,600 annually.

The US Census Bureau classifies a family of three as poor if its cash income is less than $14,128 a year, or $11,569 for a married couple.

"We get a lot of young Marines' wives who need things like eggs, bread, vegetables and such items to get through the month," said Manny Garza who helps hand out food to the needy at Oceanside's St Mary's Church.

"It's tough for them because they are so proud of what their husbands are doing, especially now that we are at war, yet they're battling at home," he said adding that many families did not like to talk of their financial woes.

Even a combat pay boost awarded to troops in Iraq has not ended the monthly cash crunch that families of low-ranking soldiers feel. *AFP*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SARS outbreak may ground Cathay Pacific

HONG KONG—Cathay Pacific Airways, Asia's fourth-largest carrier, said on Sunday it would not rule out grounding its passenger fleet as demand for travel into and out of its Hong Kong base is devastated by the deadly SARS outbreak.

"If demand falls still further, we will have to respond accordingly. Clearly we can't rule out any particular course of action, but we will respond to circumstances," Tony Tyler, director of corporate development at Cathay, said.

He was speaking after an internal Internet memo, seen by Reuters on Saturday, revealed that Cathay's passenger numbers could fall below 6,000 per day in May, which the memo said could drive the carrier to consider grounding its passenger fleet.

"The notice that was posted to our staff simply reflected the fact that, if things deteriorated, then we'd have to take appropriate steps," Tyler said, referring to the memo, which was posted internally on Friday.

"We have absolutely no plans to do that"—cancel all passenger flights, he added.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS, has hit Hong Kong and southern China especially hard and has forced airlines throughout the Asia-Pacific region to slash services.

A World Health Organization advisory warning against visiting Hong Kong and neighboring Guangdong province has led countless business and leisure travelers to postpone or cancel trips to Hong Kong.

Cathay, the territory's dominant carrier, has slashed 42 percent of its flight schedule while number-two Hong Kong carrier Dragonair has cut nearly half its flights.

Other regional carriers have also scaled back services amid the SARS outbreak and the war in Iraq. Singapore Airlines has said it will reduce capacity by almost 20 percent, while Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd said last week it would fire 1,000 staff, or about three percent of its workforce.

Passenger traffic in recent days through Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok Airport, one of Asia's busiest, has fallen by more than 60 percent in recent days, the city's airport authority said.

On Sunday, 195 flights, or 37 percent of those scheduled, were cancelled, the highest percentage since the virus began spreading in March in Hong Kong.

Cathay is carrying roughly 10,000 passengers per day, compared with 30,000 under ordinary circumstances.

"We forecast that the number of passengers could fall to less than 6,000 per day in May in which case we will have to consider grounding the entire passenger fleet," Nick Rhodes, Cathay's Director of Flight Operations, said in the memo seen on Saturday.

"We are literally hemorrhaging cash —approximately $3 million per day. The current strategy is simply to stem the bleeding and buy time," Rhodes said, citing a briefing given by the airline's chief executive officer David Turnbull on Friday.

The SARS crisis led Cathay on Friday to issue its first-ever profit warning, sending its shares to a 16-month low. Analysts have said other carriers in the region may follow suit.

Cathay's Tyler said the fall out from the virus does not "at the moment" threaten the airline's survival.

"We entered this crisis in a strong financial position, and our strategy is to make sure that we preserve our financial strength for as long as we can, and to use the resources that we have to navigate our way through this very difficult crisis," he said. *Reuters*

Hungarians hugely approve EU membership

BUDAPEST—Hungarians gave a widely expected huge "Yes" in a referendum on Saturday to joining the EU next year, but only 45.6 percent of the country's eight million voters bothered to turn out.

With more than 99 percent of ballots counted, preliminary results from the electoral committee showed 83.76 percent of those who voted in the former communist state had backed accession to the European Union in May 2004.

The turnout was well below forecasts of more than 60 percent, but the result never seemed in doubt as all four parties in Hungary's parliament had joined in a massive campaign since February for a "Yes" vote.

For many Hungarians, the main reason for joining the bloc of wealthier European nations was economic. Unfettered access to the EU will help solidify free market reforms implemented since the fall of communism in 1989.

"Europe is a chance and an opportunity for each citizen of the republic . . . We arrive into a richer, safer and calmer world. Into a reunified Europe," Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy told thousands of cheering Hungarians on the banks of the Danube River as celebratory fireworks lit up the night sky.

The Hungarian vote is the third in a series of ballots meant to seal enlargement of the EU next year to 25 members with the entry of 10 mostly former communist East European countries.

Slovenia and Malta have already approved accession.

But some Hungarians fear membership of an enlarged EU will dilute the sovereignty of a country like Hungary, and that those in rural areas are likely to see fewer benefits from the increased investment and wealth that is expected.

"I was certain that a 'Yes' to the European Union would win over the politically driven petty bickering," Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs said, referring to some members of parliament who had tried to play the nationalist card during the campaign.

Financial markets have mostly factored in a "Yes" vote, though analysts say Hungary's forint currency could get a boost.

"After the fall of communism, the country was split into two parts, losers and winners . . . We should learn from the regime change by saying our job now is to make all Hungarians winners in EU accession," said former Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

"The hardest part of the job still lies ahead. Instead of big words, we will need big deeds now," he said. *Reuters*

Rescued POW Jessica Lynch returns to US

ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, Maryland— Jessica Lynch, the teenage US private rescued from her Iraqi captors in a daring commando raid, landed safe in the United States on Saturday.

Private Lynch was carried from the C-17 military plane to the applause of a small crowd that had gathered to catch a glimpse of the petite 19-year-old strapped to a hospital gurney.

She arrived from the US airbase in Ramstein, Germany where she was treated for two broken legs, her right arm, leg and ankle, as well as head and spinal injuries, but no gunshot or knife wounds.

The small-town girl from West Virginia who joined the Army to earn money for college has become something of national hero in the United States. Her return to the Andrews airbase, just outside Washington, was broadcast live on many television channels. NBC television said it will make her story into a movie.

Lynch's ordeal began on March 23, the third day of the Iraq war, when her unit of the 507th maintenance company took a wrong turn near the southern city of Nasiriyah.

Iraqi forces ambushed her maintenance company. Several of her comrades died, but the female supply clerk fought bravely, until she was captured, survivors said.

She was held in a dismal Iraqi hospital. There, an Iraqi man who had come to visit his wife spotted her, and walked several kilometers to tell US troops.

The man made several of these trips, each time giving US intelligence officers information and drawing them maps of the hospital, showing them where Lynch could be found.

US special forces set up a daring night helicopter rescue for Lynch.

On April 1, US marines launched a diversionary attack as helicopters swooped in, carrying Army rangers who set up a perimeter, and navy SEALS who stormed the hospital to snatch Lynch away from her captors.

They found the bodies of eight of her comrades who had initially been listed as missing in action.

Following her dramatic rescue, Lynch was taken for treatment to the biggest US military hospital outside the United States at Landstuhl, Germany, where she was joined a week ago by her family from the town of Palestine, West Virginia.

Col. David Rubenstein, the military commander at the Landstuhl medical center, said Lynch had undergone operations for multiple injuries.

Now back in the United States, Lynch will convalesce at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where she will also receive psychological support. *AFP*

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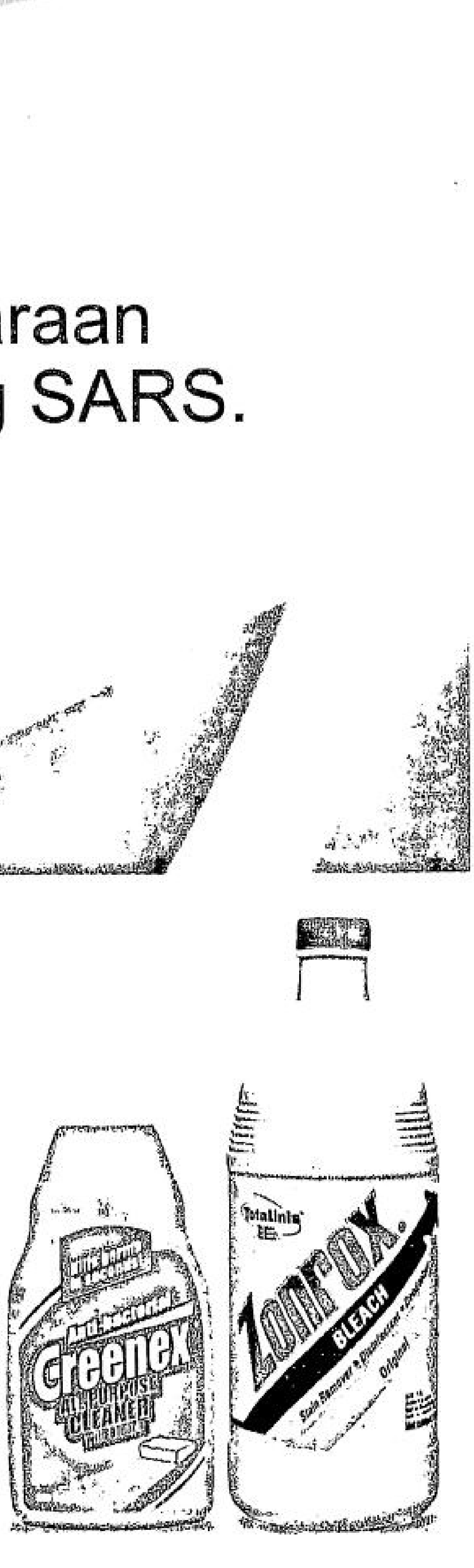

Hopes raised as N. Korea shifts on nuke talks

SEOUL/WASHINGTON—North Korea shifted significantly toward US calls for multilateral talks on its suspected nuclear arms plans and Washington voiced interest, saying it would follow up through diplomatic channels.

The North Korean comments on Saturday could mark a breakthrough in the nuclear standoff just days after US-led forces removed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power in a war the South Korean president said had "petrified" the North.

"If the US is ready to make a bold switchover in its Korea policy for a settlement of the nuclear issue, North Korea will not stick to any particular dialogue format," the North's KCNA news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying.

Until now, North Korea has insisted on bilateral talks.

Washington, which lumps communist North Korea in an "axis of evil" with Iraq and Iran for seeking weapons of mass destruction, wants talks that also include regional players South Korea, Japan, Russia and China.

"We noted the statement with interest," US State Department spokesperson Philip Reeker said on Saturday, adding:

"We expect to follow up through appropriate diplomatic channels."

The United States and North Korea do not have formal diplomatic relations, but exchange messages through diplomatic channels in New York. The United States can also work through intermediaries such as Russia and China.

The North's spokesperson did not specify what would constitute a "bold switchover" but the impoverished, energy-starved North has demanded security guarantees and aid in the past.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun reiterated on Sunday that he would make every effort to solve North Korea's nuclear crisis in a peaceful manner.

"I am confident we can resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and diplomatic channels," he told an anniversary ceremony for establishing Korea's interim government in China during Japanese colonial rule in the early 1900s.

Kim Jung-roh, deputy spokesperson at the South Korean Unification Ministry, said by telephone that Seoul had expected North Korea to shift its position gradually.

"Also, as the Iraq war is coming to an end faster than expected, North Korea has less options to take," he said.

Roh told the Washington Post in an interview published on Friday the US-led Iraq war had had a profound impact on North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and other North Korean officials.

"Especially watching the recent Iraqi war, I'm sure they are very much terrified . . . petrified by the Iraqi war," the Post quoted him as saying.

North Korea has said it will be the next US target after Iraq, something Washington denies. It says it wants a diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis.

Analysts said the fall of Iraq's Saddam Hussein reminded North Korea's leadership that the Bush administration would not reward its bad behavior, and led the North to seek binding the United States to some sort of an agreement with Pyongyang.

"I think it's a very good lesson in dealing with North Korea; peaceful means do not work with a country like North Korea," said Lee Jung-hoon, a professor of Yonsei University's Graduate School of International Studies. *Reuters*

4th Internet suicide pact shocks Japan

TOKYO—Two men and a woman were found dead in a car in the mountains outside Tokyo at the weekend, in yet another suspected Internet suicide pact among Japanese youths, police said Sunday.

The car, filled with carbon monoxide from charcoal burnt in a portable clay stove, was discovered Saturday on a mountain road in Ichihara, some 50 km southeast of Tokyo.

A 26-year-old local male university student was in the driver's seat and a 33-year-old company worker from Tsu, some 300 km to the west, was in the back seat along with a 22-year-old female dietician from Tokyo's suburbs.

"It is highly possible that these people got to know each other through a Web site on suicide pacts," a duty officer at the Ichihara police station said. "This one looks similar to the previous cases involving the Internet."

Nine other people have died in three similar incidents since Feb. 11. They are believed to have contacted each other through an Internet site encouraging suicide. *AFP*

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Indonesia's bloodiest conflict may rage again

JAKARTA—Indonesia's longest and bloodiest conflict is in imminent danger of breaking out again, just four months after a peace agreement was signed to international acclaim.

The government last Thursday told troops to be ready to go back to war in Aceh within five days if necessary, unless disputes over the pact can be settled at a meeting of a Joint Council—the final arbiter.

Separatist rebels said they would refuse to attend any meeting inside Indonesia and proposed Geneva. Mediators from the Henry Dunant Center were frantically trying to get agreement on a date and venue.

The accord to end the 26-year war in the energy-rich province on Sumatra island looks increasingly fragile.

"We might by some miracle get through the next five days," said Sidney Jones, Indonesia project director for the International Crisis Group, on Friday.

"Even if we get that far I think the mood in government and cabinet and the public at large is 'Crush separatists.'

"It will be very difficult to get the process back to the negotiating table." If the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) refuses to take part in a Joint Council meeting, Jones said, "it will be a green light to the Army to go ahead—the signal the Army has been waiting for."

Force has failed in the past.

"During the 25 years of the Aceh conflict, a military approach has always failed while a dialogue approach has not been proven to fail," media reports quoted analyst J. Kristiadi as saying.

Human rights activist Munir said a new military operation "will not produce anything but more civilian casualties." He said it was very possible conflict could be imminent.

Jones faulted both sides.

During the first two months after the agreement, "GAM undertook 'in your face' rallies and went around using every possible forum to tell people this agreement was the first step to independence," she said.

The pact makes no mention of independence, which Jakarta implacably opposes. Both sides supposedly accept autonomy as a basis for further talks.

The rebels had regained control of the civilian government structure in a number of places at sub-district and village level and had been recruiting, Jones said.

The Army for its part had been using its old East Timor tactics, she and other analysts said, by mobilizing civilians to protest outside or attack offices of the Joint Security Committee which monitors the truce.

Monitors were withdrawn from field offices last week due to fears for their safety. Killings sharply increased, with 16 between Tuesday and Thursday.

Analysts said top security minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is trying to fend off rising demands from the Army and much of the public for a military operation.

"It's clear there were a lot of Army objections to the idea of negotiating with the rebels—Endriartono (Armed Forces Chief Endriartono Sutarto) and Yudhoyono persuaded the military to go along," Jones said.

One way to get GAM to stop fighting could be to offer incentives to take part in the political process, Sinn Fein-style. But the government refuses to accept locally based parties.

A start by GAM in disarming could also reduce tension. "But it's got to a point they (GAM) will say that with the Army out for blood, the last thing they will do is lay down their arms," Jones said.

At some level in the Army there was a genuine concern that it was being denied its rightful role to defend the integrity of Indonesia.

The Army is also trying to regain the dominating role it enjoyed for decades under Suharto.

The Aceh situation, said Jones, "is a heaven-sent opportunity to prove that only the Army can deal with internal security problems—even though they had a role in creating most of them." One problem, she said, is that the peace deal assumes the Army and GAM actually want peace.

"Elements on both sides have an economic interest in a continuing conflict—getting a cut from public works contracts, extortion on the roads, the marijuana trade, involvement in illegal logging."

Of the estimated 10,000 deaths in the war, most have been civilians.

"Civilians will get caught in the middle where they always do," Jones said. "That's the real tragedy."

AFP

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
TOLL REGULATORY BOARD

TRB ADVISORY FOR ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO THE NORTH

Aware of the heavy volume of motorists during Holy Week and the impact on traffic of on-going upgrading and rehabilitation works at the North Luzon Expressway, the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) advises the public to plan their trips and be aware of alternative routes to the north.

"This is the first time that the North Luzon Expressway is being rehabilitated at such magnitude and we anticipate that vehicular traffic along the NLE which is usually heavy during Holy Week may be affected by the on-going works," TRB Executive Director Jaime S. Dumlao said.

Dumlao further advised that, "While tollway operator PNCC and the civil works contractor Leighton will do their best to manage traffic along the expressway, we hope the public will also plan their trips carefully and be aware of traffic conditions and alternative routes to take as possible contingencies."

To date, the crucial segment undergoing rehabilitation is the north bound section after the Candaba viaduct which is the 8-kilometer stretch between the San Simon and San Fernando Interchanges.

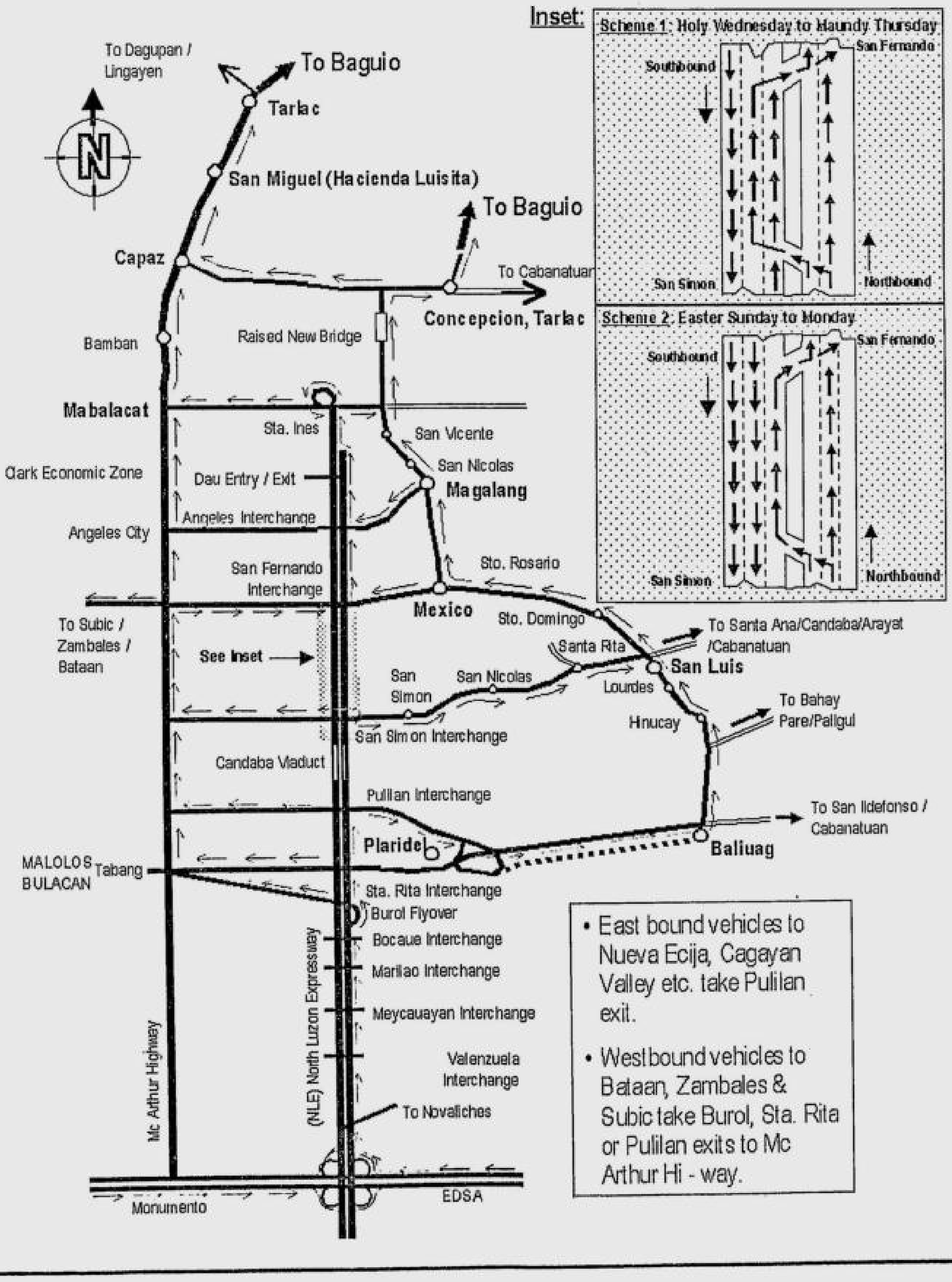
To help decongest counterflow traffic during Holy Week, Leighton will reopen the northbound lanes of the San Simon-San Fernando stretch starting Holy Wednesday, April 16. Additional water trucks will also be deployed to suppress dust and graders to repair any damage to the access road.

Counterflow traffic using the southbound lanes will allocate two lanes for northbound vehicles on Holy Wednesday, April 16 and Maundy Thursday, April 17. Lane allocation will be reversed on Easter Sunday, April 20 and Monday, April 21 and allow two lanes for southbound vehicles. *(see inset)*

To avoid traffic build-up in the San Simon stretch, TRB advises motorists to consider alternative northbound routes through the Sta. Rita, Pulilan, and San Simon Interchanges *(follow arrows on map)*. Travelers to Baguio, Tarlac and Pangasinan may use either the east or west sections of the NLE.

For those with Clark, Pampanga, Subic, Zambales or Bataan destinations, exits towards the west section of the NLE are recommended.

Suggested Alternative Routes to the North During Holy Week


Inset:
Scheme 1: Holy Wednesday to Maundy Thursday
Southbound
Northbound
San Fernando
San Simon
Scheme 2: Easter Sunday to Monday
Southbound
Northbound
San Fernando
San Simon
To Dagupan / Lingayen
To Baguio
Tarlac
N
San Miguel (Hacienda Luisita)
To Baguio
Capaz
To Cabanatuan
Concepcion, Tarlac
Bamban
Raised New Bridge
Mabalacat
Sta. Ines
San Vicente
San Nicolas
Magalang
Clark Economic Zone
Dau Entry / Exit
Angeles City
Angeles Interchange
San Fernando Interchange
Sto. Rosario
Mexico
Sto. Domingo
To Subic / Zambales / Bataan
See Inset
Santa Rita
To Santa Ana/Candaba/Arayat /Cabanatuan
San Luis
San Simon
San Nicolas
Lourdes
Hnucay
To Bahay Pare/Paligui
San Simon Interchange
Candaba Viaduct
Pulilan Interchange
To San Ildefonso / Cabanatuan
Plaridel
Baliuag
MALOLOS BULACAN
Tabang
Sta. Rita Interchange
Burol Flyover
Bocaue Interchange
Marilao Interchange
Meycauayan Interchange
Valenzuela Interchange
To Novaliches
Mc Arthur Highway
(NLE) North Luzon Expressway
Monumento
EDSA

- East bound vehicles to Nueva Ecija, Cagayan Valley etc. take Pulilan exit.
- Westbound vehicles to Bataan, Zambales & Subic take Burol, Sta. Rita or Pulilan exits to Mc Arthur Hi - way.

Woman spurns love-struck Fujimori

TOKYO—Love-struck former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, who is wanted on homicide charges by authorities in Lima, has had marriage advances rebuffed by his Japanese girlfriend, according to a gossip magazine.

Fujimori, who is living in exile here, fell in love with 36-year-old businesswoman Satomi Kataoka at first sight, the popular Friday magazine reported.

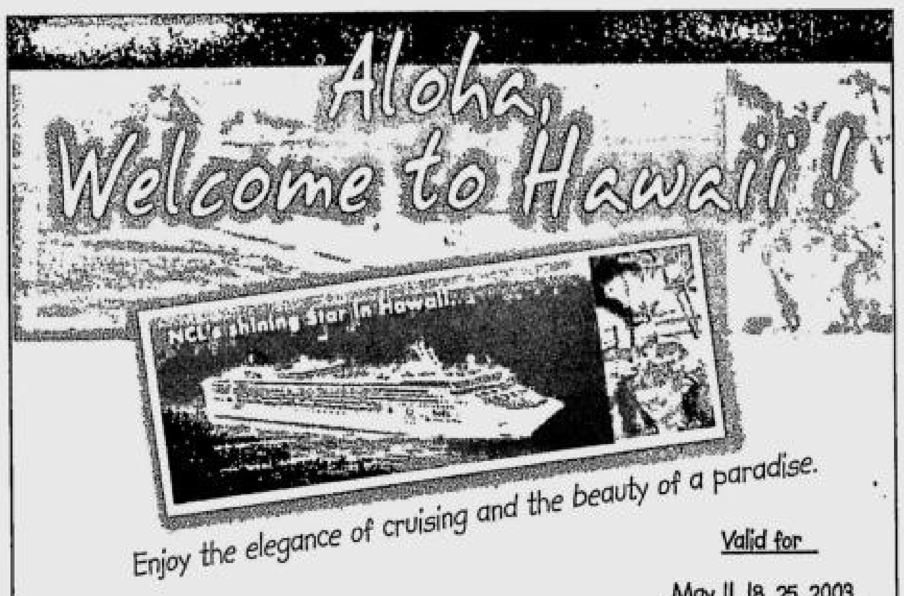
"I intend to marry her," said the 64-year-old.

But Kataoka, president of Tokyo's Hotel Princess Garden, has other plans.

"I am extremely honored but I still have something else to do," she said.

Fujimori, who is divorced, fled to Japan in November 2000 as a major corruption scandal broke in Peru, and resigned the presidency by fax from Tokyo.

AFP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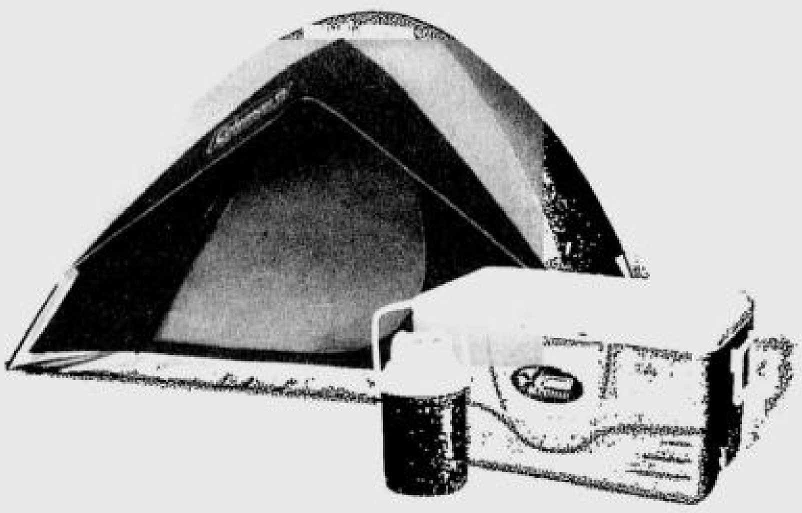

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Fear of Church keeps solons away from bill

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The reproductive health bill might just gather dust in the House of Representatives as deliberations were being stalled by the lack of support among congressmen.

Bukidnon Rep. Nereus Acosta, one of the bill's authors, admitted that legislators were wary to support House Bill 4110 because of fears their political career would suffer come 2004.

Earlier, the Catholic Church warned congressmen against supporting the bill.

"I don't think I was elected as a Catholic legislator, the people voted for me to create laws favorable to them, I am a legislator of the Filipinos regardless of religion and ethnic groups," Acosta said in defending his continued support of the bill.

At the same time, he again blasted the Catholic hierarchy for its efforts to deprive women of access to safe, affordable, and quality reproductive health care. *Grace Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

2 slain as 30 NPA rebels raid police sub-station

ARAYAT, Pampanga—A militiaman and a civilian were killed while three others were wounded Friday night when about 30 suspected communist rebels attacked a police sub-station here.

Police identified the fatalities as Freddie Briones, 47, a member of the local Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu), and Francis Zablan, 23, a resident of Plazang Luma.

Wounded were SPO1 Senon Salanga, Barangay San Antonio Councilman Benigno de Leon, and Cafgu member Rolando Lopez.

Supt. Delfin Respicio, police chief here, said the attack on the police sub-station in Barangay San Antonio happened at around 9:30 p.m.

Police said the group that attacked the station could be New People's Army.

Quoting witnesses, Respicio said the armed men arrived on board a six-wheel truck and immediately fired at the station.

Although caught off guard, policemen and Cafgu members returned fire. The gunfight lasted for about 15 minutes, police said.

The suspects entered the police station, took the victims' four M-14 and M-16 Armalite rifles and fled on foot.

Ecija raid

In Nueva Ecija, Army troops captured four NPA rebels in a raid on a suspected rebel safe house in Cuyapo town on Saturday.

The four, including a political officer, belonged to the armed propaganda units of the NPA's Nueva Ecija provincial committee's Front 3 (code-named Delta) operating in Cuyapo and Guimba towns, according to Col. Jovenal Narcise, commander of the Army's 702nd Infantry Brigade.

Narcise identified the captured rebels as Analyn Flores alias Ka Ailyn, Cecil Anastacio alias Ka Ecil or Rea, Christopher Arquines alias Ka Argy or Jerry, and Alvaro Luciano alias Ka Baldo or Bojo.

Narcise said Arquines and Luciano are the unit's political and propaganda officers, respectively.

Army soldiers said they arrested the four rebels in a safe house at Barangay Bonifacio in Cuyapo.

A former NPA rebel, whom Narcise did not identify, helped locate the four. Army reports said the four were included in the military's order of battle.

Narcise said the rebels belonged to the NPA unit that attacked an Army detachment in Agapulo Este in Lupao, Nueva Ecija, last year. A soldier and a Cafgu member were killed in that attack.

He said the rebels were also involved in the abduction and murder of Aglipayan pastor Dakila Lopez of San Jose City in May 2001.

Training camp

In eastern Pangasinan, soldiers from the 48th Infantry Battalion discovered an abandoned training camp of the NPA in Barangay Diket in Umingan town.

In northern Aurora, Narcise claimed 20 NPA rebels were killed in the March 31 encounter at Sitio Ngasngas in Barangay Dinadiawan in remote Dipaculao town.

But the INQUIRER learned there had been no body count. The Army's claim could not be independently verified.

The Army previously gave conflicting accounts on the casualties, with Narcise claiming that there was no casualty count on the NPA side immediately after the firefight.

The Army's Northern Luzon Command in Tarlac City said eight rebels were killed in that encounter. But since last week, Narcise said intelligence personnel were confirming reports that some of those who died in the clash were high school or college students in Baler town, Aurora's capital.

This surfaced after the Army received information that several students had been missing since the encounter erupted. *Jun Malig, Tonette Orejas and Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Gas find in Aklan town 'small-scale'

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr., *PDI Visayas Bureau*

NEW WASHINGTON, Aklan—The natural gas found in a fishpond in this town was of shallow origin and good only for small-scale use, according to the Department of Energy.

In a report sent to Mayor Edmund Peralta, the DOE's oil and gas division said samples taken from the site contained methane gas associated with shallow biogenic gas (produced by living organisms or biological processes.)

Ismael Ocampo, chief of the DOE's oil and gas division, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview that the gas was usually found in swampy areas with decayed plants.

He said the source of gas has a small volume of reserves and is only good for cooking.

A source is considered to have commercial value if it has a potential gas reserve of at least 3 billion cubic feet.

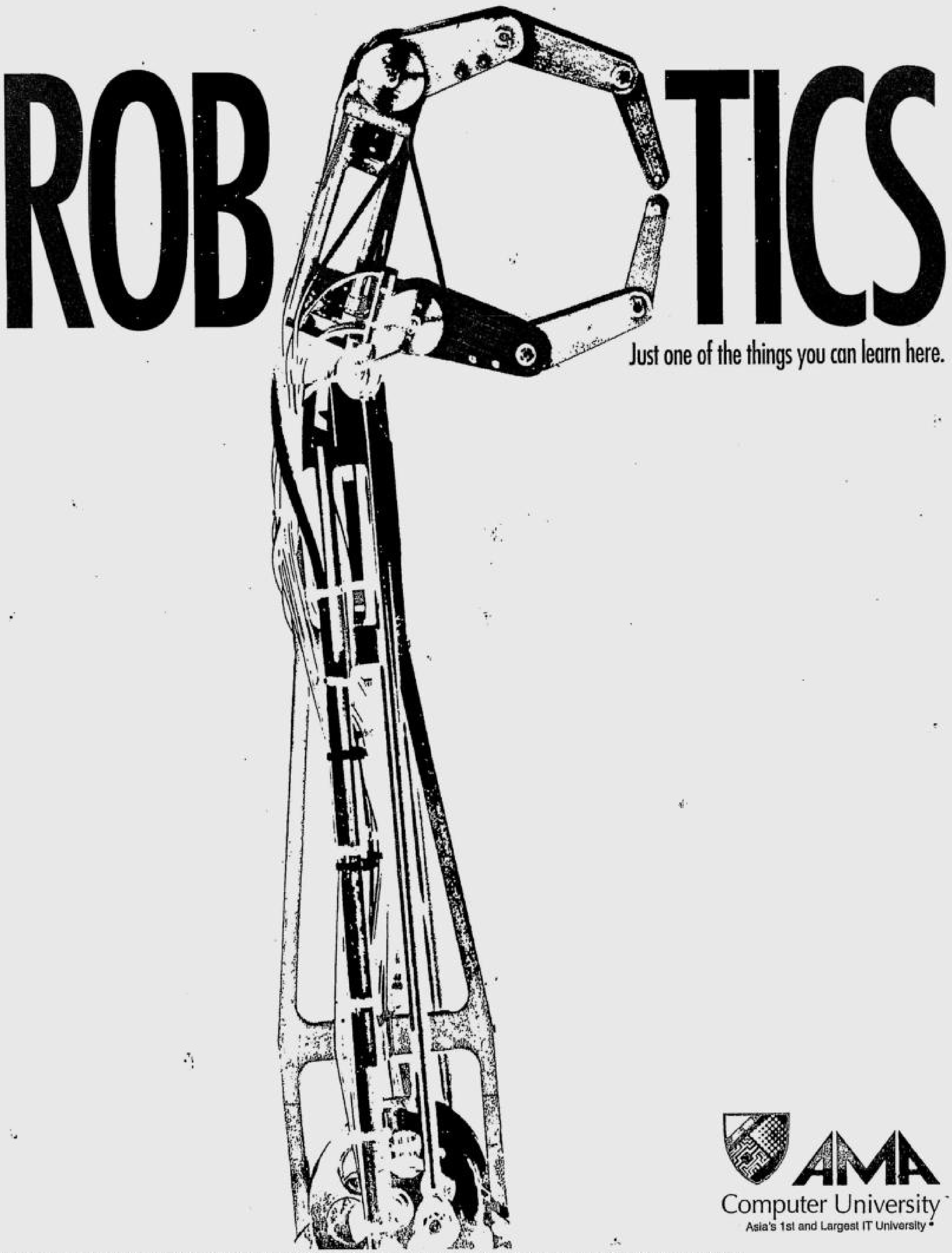
Peralta said the municipality has no plans to sell the gas considering the limited volume of the reserves.

Peralta sought the DOE's assistance to inspect the site and to determine the volume of the gas.

The energy department sent a two-member team on March 20 to check on the reported source of gas in a fishpond of Ireneo Dungon Sr. in Sitio Bagacay, Barangay Jalas, New Washington about 9 km southeast from the capital town of Kalibo.

The reported discovery was the first in this area.

The team collected two sets of samples to determine the type of gas. The samples were taken to the DOE's Energy Research Laboratory for testing.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Suspect in mosque blast admits links with MILF

By Hernan de la Cruz
PDI Mindanao Bureau

PAGADIAN CITY—A suspect who was arrested shortly after Tuesday's explosion inside a mosque in Barangay Banale here claimed he was directed by leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to use mosques and Arabic schools to assemble bombs, the military said.

Earlier, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes came under heavy criticisms after he made a similar claim.

The MILF branded the claim as part of government propaganda against the guerrillas.

Col. Eugenio Cedo, commander of the Philippine Army's 101st Infantry Brigade, told reporters that Badrodin Abdullah, alias Benhur Abdul, also admitted taking money from the rebel group for his work as bomb maker.

Cedo said the suspect, who was injured when the last of the four bombs he was putting together exploded, also admitted it was not his first time to make bombs for the rebel group.

Abdullah, 22, a resident of Dinaig, Maguindanao, said he was paid P1,000 for every bomb he delivered in the past.

Abdullah, whom Cedo regards as a bomb expert, identified a commander Dacula and a Castro as his contacts in the MILF. He said he arrived in Zamboanga del Sur about six months ago.

"He told our investigators that he was instructed by the MILF leadership to seek refuge in mosques and (madaris) where they could manufacture bombs," Cedo said.

Cedo urged Muslim clerics not to allow terrorists to use mosques and Arabic schools for terrorism.

"Because once (mosques) are used in terroristic purposes, then it ceases to be a mosque . . . it no longer serves its purpose as place of worship," Cedo said.

Angeles councilors file graft case vs Clark, customs execs

ANGELES CITY—Eight city councilors filed a graft complaint against officials of the Clark Development Corp. and the Bureau of Customs who allegedly allowed the company of an associate of former President Joseph Estrada to "over-import" duty-free items through the Clark Special Economic Zone since October 2001.

The complaint against Victor Jose Luciano, CDC executive vice president, and Isidro Sumulong Jr., BOC officer-in-charge in Clark, was filed on Friday at the Office of the Ombudsman.

Councilors Alex Cauguiran, Ireneo Alvaro Jr., Ares Yabut, Louie Reyes, Carlito Ganzon, Rodolfo Simeon, Agapito del Rosario and Alexander Indiongco filed the complaint on the strength of the council's Resolution 3845.

The three-page resolution, approved on March 18, also specified how the two officials allegedly gave "unwarranted benefit and advantage" to Puregold, a duty-free store said to be owned by Lucio Co, reportedly a friend of Estrada.

Luciano, reached on Saturday, declined to comment until the Ombudsman had notified him of the complaint. In a previous interview with the INQUIRER, Luciano had belied the council's allegations of wrongdoings.

Puregold officials remained silent on the controversy since Cauguiran exposed the alleged anomalies in February.

In the complaint, the council named only Luciano and Sumulong because they issued the permits and the actual entry orders for the importation or the direct purchase of imported duty-free goods and the purchase of the same goods from stores in Subic.

Under the bases conversion law and an executive order issued by then President Fidel Ramos, no taxes are levied on imported consumable goods sold in duty-free stores within Clark and Subic.

Citing the findings of its initial investigation, the city council said Puregold imported and brought into Clark at least 4.3 million cans of Maling meat products and more than a million bottles of wine and liquor from October 2001 up to June 30, 2002.

These volumes (107 container vans of Maling and 61 container vans of wine and liquor) were several times over the monthly import limits set by the circular.

The circular only allowed every duty-free store a monthly import and bringing in of only three container vans of Maling, a container van of cigarettes and a container van of wine and liquor.

The council said the volume of imported items was also "way beyond" the total number of shoppers—265,971—that the CDC projected to have in Clark for the same nine-month period. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Pagasa says anti-drought measures should continue

BACOLOD CITY—All government agencies were advised to continue taking appropriate measures to soften the adverse impact of El Niño in the Philippines on agriculture, water resources, health and sanitation.

The El Niño weather phenomenon, while mild, would last until the second half of this year. Because of it, major parts of the country would still lack rain in April, with a slim chance of tropical cyclone occurrences, according to an advisory by the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (DOST-Pagasa).

Lack of rain has started to dry up rain-fed farms in some areas of the country, and reduced water levels in some dams and reservoirs, the advisory said.

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon on Saturday said that was the reason immediate cloud seeding efforts would be undertaken by the provincial government to induce rain to save the province's crops.

"It would be good if we could induce rains at least three times before the end of the month, and we hope that there will be some natural rain in May," he said.

To help mitigate the effects of the dry spell in the countryside, Maranon said food-for-work will be provided to farmers tilling one hectare or less and to farm workers and families with underweight children.

A maximum of 4 kilos of rice per day will be provided each beneficiary, and only one member of the family will be eligible for the food-for-work program, Maranon said.

Activities under the program must be related to food security and agricultural productivity such as irrigation, canal excavation, rehabilitation and clearing, farm to market road maintenance and crop production.

Also included in the program are pest management, fisheries-related projects, sea patrols, seedling production and maintenance and farm enterprise development, the governor said. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

No Lenten trek to Kanlaon

BACOLOD CITY—Mt. Kanlaon in Negros Island, a favorite destination for mountain climbers and faith healers during the Lenten season, will be closed to trekkers this Holy Week for safety reasons.

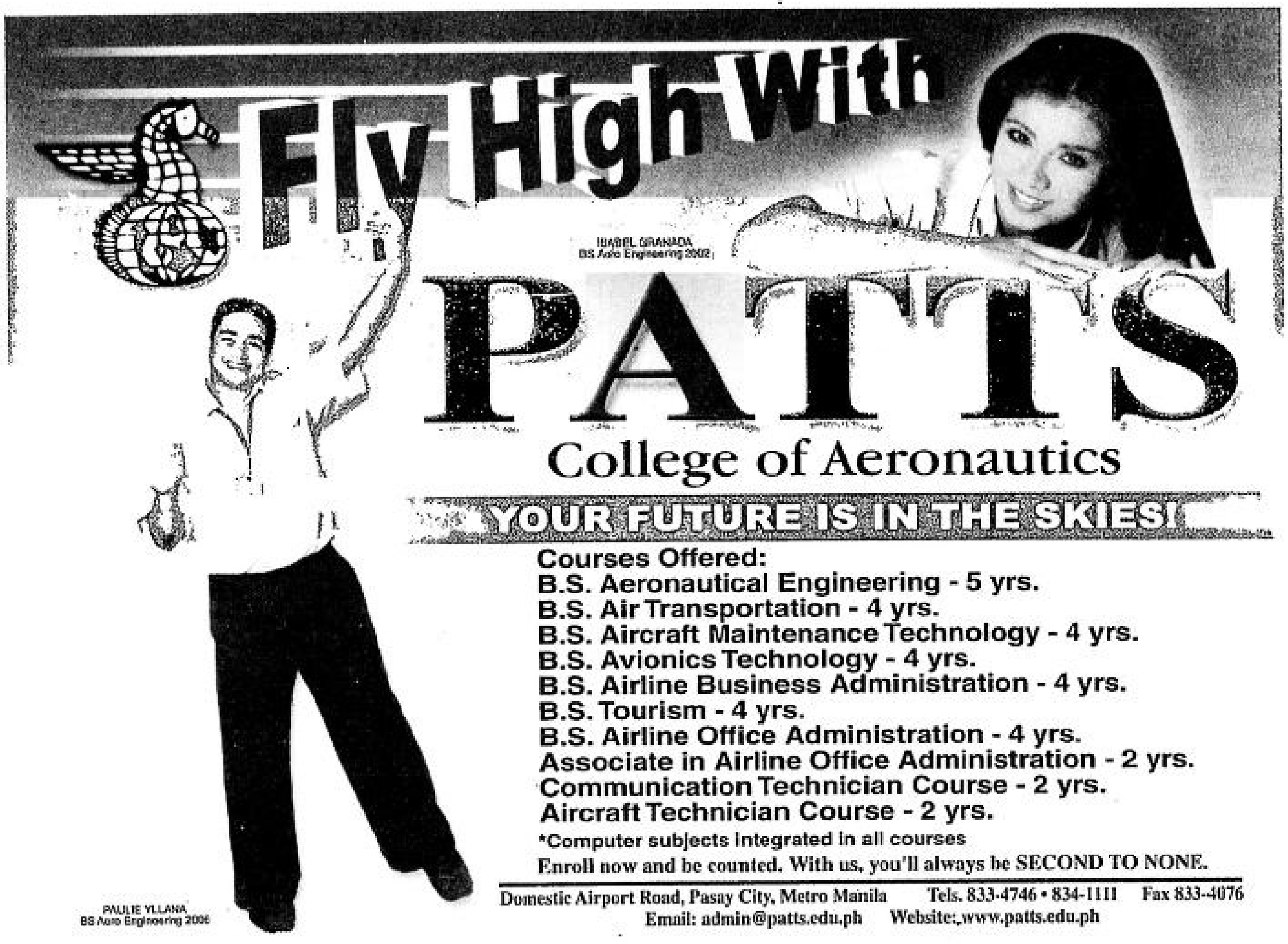
The Office of the Protected Area Superintendent will not issue any trekking permit going into the 4-kilometer permanent danger zone and to the summit of Mt. Kanlaon because of "low level episodes of unrests" recorded near the volcano's crater, Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon said Saturday.

Sudden steam and ash explosions may occur at the crater area and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has decided to raise Mt. Kanlaon's alert status to Level 1, explained Vicfran Defante, the head of the provincial disaster management team.

Defante said Army soldiers and community volunteers belonging to the Green Brigades have been tasked with manning the entrance stations going to the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park to ensure no one would violate the ban.

Any person caught violating Mt. Kanlaon's closure will be arrested for illegal entry, Defante said.

Faith healers from various parts of the country had traditionally been climbing Mt. Kanlaon's summit on Holy Thursday and Good Friday in the belief that tree roots and barks they could gather from the area on these days have healing powers. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*



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GMA on popularity dip: We bear our own crosses

From page A1

Iraq—speculation arose that her message was in fact referring to her own situation.

"*Si Kristo ay inakusahan ng kung anu-ano, pinarusqhan, pinatungan ng koronang tinik, nilatigo, nilait, ininsulto, itinakwil at ipinako sa krus. Tayo pa kaya* (Christ was accused of all sorts of things, punished, crowned with thorns, scourged, humiliated, insulted, betrayed and crucified. Can we expect to suffer less)?" the President said.

She had earlier said she did not regret supporting the United States even if this resulted in her negative 14 rating in the latest Social Weather Stations survey.

"The lesson we can learn here is the truth that we have to bear our own crosses. We all need to commiserate with our fellowmen," she continued in Filipino.

The President also urged every citizen to "make his or her own contribution to the betterment of the nation . . . reinvigorate hope, and strengthen our beliefs and faith."

"It is a small sacrifice from each of us, but its yield is a better life for us all," she said. "If we come to think of it, this cannot compare to the hardship endured by our Lord Jesus Christ in order to save us from our sins."

The President also said the country could "overcome challenges if we unite and help each other."

But House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla yesterday presented another challenge to unity. Reacting to the news that the Macapagal administration would send a humanitarian mission to Iraq, he asked where the money would come from.

"Where are we going to get the money? Are we going there as mercenaries of the US?" Padilla said.

He said the government should clarify the issue of financing following its announcement that Ms Macapagal had already formed two task forces to oversee the 500-member inter-agency humanitarian mission and to act on the government and private sectors' role in the reconstruction of Iraq.

How can Manila shoulder the expense, Padilla said, when it "hardly produces money in similar undertakings like attending to the needs of evacuees in the South."

He was referring to the tens of thousands of civilians who fled their homes in Central Mindanao and crowded into government centers following the military's Buliok Complex offensive in Pikit, North Cotabato, in February.

Improved ratings

In an interview over radio station dzMM, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Malacañang fully expected Ms Macapagal's ratings to improve in another survey made by SWS' competitor, Pulse Asia.

Bunye said an improvement was also seen in an "in-house survey" by the Palace.

"I believe that the public's opinion will change," Bunye said, adding that polls "merely serve as a guide for the President."

"She's not afraid to make unpopular decisions for as long as she thinks that these are correct decisions," he said.

The President received strong support from a key legislative ally. Deputy Speaker for the Visayas Raul Gonzalez said those people who were critical of Ms Macapagal's strong support for the US-led war in Iraq were now "eating their words," as the Philippines was expected to reap benefits from the imminent end of the war.

"I always expected the Philippines won't be overlooked (in the reconstruction of Iraq) because the country is a steadfast supporter of the US," he said in a phone interview.

US President George Bush's phone call to Ms Macapagal the other day to thank her for her support was an indication that "he was satisfied with (the moral support given by Manila), especially when at that time he needed friends when almost all countries were against the war," Gonzalez said.

He noted that the "body language" of Bush was for the so-called "coalition of the willing" to play a "central" role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.

The reconstruction, Gonzalez said, was a "big project" that "even to be able to send a few thousands of Filipinos there would be a big help to the economy."

Militant groups

Gonzalez also said he expected the job prospects in Iraq to improve the approval ratings of the President. "Let them eat their words," he said, referring to the President's critics.

But militant groups were unimpressed by Bush's telephone diplomacy.

Fernando Hicap, chair of the fisherfolk group Pamalakaya, said the President's media handlers were mistaken in expecting that the telephone call from the White House would improve her image.

Hicap said Bush himself had become unpopular not only among the Arabs, Europeans and other peace-loving nations, but even among the American people who are protesting the US occupation of Iraq.

"US President Bush, like Mrs. Arroyo, is being asked by the American people to step down and resign from public office," Hicap said.

"If Malacañang and the President's public relations army think this thank-you call from Mr. Bush would boost the President's waning popularity rating, they are all wrong," Hicap said. *With a report from Gerald Lacuarta*

US forces meeting . . .

From page A1

was not any resistance," Franks told CNN in an interview monitored at war headquarters in Qatar.

"I think we would be premature to say well, gosh, it's all done, it's all finished," he said.

Tikrit, a city 175 km north of Baghdad, is the last major Iraqi center not yet controlled by US forces.

Saddam's concentration of power among his closest family, and distrust of most people outside his Albu Nasir tribe, meant Tikritis formed the backbone of his most loyal military forces.

"We know there are pockets of, I've heard them referred to as everything from paramilitary to death squads to Fedayeen Saddam, we know that there are pockets of that," Franks told CNN in an interview monitored at war headquarters in Qatar.

"We also know there are pockets of foreigners in Iraq who had decided to fight to their last breath," he said.

Earlier on Sunday, CNN correspondent Brent Sadler and his crew escaped serious injury when their vehicles came under fire in Tikrit. His team shot footage showing that a military base in the northern outskirts had been abandoned.

Franks said Marines advancing on Tikrit had found seven missing US soldiers after being tipped off to their whereabouts by an Iraqi.

Some military officials have speculated that Saddam and his closest advisers might be holed up in Tikrit. Others believe he might have been either seriously, if not fatally, wounded in an air raid on Baghdad last week.

After more than three weeks of fighting, US-led forces have arrested just one senior Iraqi official—Saddam's top scientific adviser, Gen. Amer Hammoudi al-Saadi, who handed himself in to the new military authorities on Saturday.

US intelligence officials believe he could be the key to unlocking secrets about Iraq's weapons programs. But Saadi insisted Iraq had no banned chemical or biological arms—the ostensible reason for Washington and London to attack Iraq.

The media have speculated that senior Iraqi figures might have escaped to neighboring Syria. Washington warned Damascus not to become a haven for Saddam supporters or for "terrorists."

"Now that the regime has gone in Baghdad, we hope that Syria will understand there is an opportunity for a better way for them, if they would stop supporting terrorist activities, and we hope the Syrians will respond accordingly," US Secretary of State Colin Powell told BBC television.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara said accusations that Damascus had helped Saddam's regime and provided military assistance to Baghdad were baseless. *Reuters, AP*

AFP

SARS UPDATE

Following is a breakdown of suspected or probable cases worldwide of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the number of confirmed deaths reported from the virus:

ASIA	CASES	DEATHS
Australia	5	0
China	1,336	60
Hong Kong	1,140	40
Indonesia	3	0
Japan	4	0
Kazakhstan	1	0
Laos	1	0
Malaysia	51	1
Philippines	1	0
Singapore	140	9
Taiwan	23	0
Thailand	8	2
Vietnam	62	5
EUROPE		
Belgium	1	0
Britain	6	0
France	17	0
Germany	6	0
Ireland	2	0
Italy	10	0
Romania	1	0
Russia	1	0
Spain	1	0
Sweden	1	0
Switzerland	6	0
NORTH AMERICA		
Canada	274	13
United States	166	0
CENTRAL AMERICA		
Mexico	1	0
SOUTH AMERICA		
Brazil	2	0
MIDDLE EAST		
Israel	1	0
Kuwait	1	0
AFRICA		
South Africa	1	0
Totals:	3,273	130

Sources: World Health Organization, national health officials, AFP

INQGRAPHIC: ESambo

Breakthrough on SARS

From page A1

lungs to fill with fluid.

There is no cure to date. Because of the lack of a definitive test for the illness, doctors currently classify patients as either "suspected" or "probable" cases.

Genetic sequencing

A team of scientists in Canada, however, said they had completed the genetic sequencing of the coronavirus believed to be causing SARS. They said the breakthrough was the first step toward developing a test to diagnose the illness.

"One could use these portions of the viral genome to test patients for infection by the virus," said Dr. Marco Marra, director of the Genome Sciences Center.

Marra said scientists needed the genetic code in developing a diagnostic test. Early diagnosis would enable doctors to better manage their patients.

At present, doctors use anti-body tests, molecular tests and cell culture to identify the coronavirus in blood samples of suspected cases but they have been found to be inefficient.

Determining whether a victim is producing anti-bodies to fight SARS through blood tests would take at least two to three weeks, by which time most patients are either completely recovered or in a very critical condition.

The molecular test gauges the genome component of the coronavirus but it had not been "very sensitive" based on studies done in Hong Kong and other SARS-affected areas, where only 40 to 50 percent of positive cases had surfaced.

Further, most samples for the molecular tests are taken from the throat and nose rather than the lungs, where the virus mainly replicates. Taking respiratory secretions from the lungs is considered as too risky for doctors and nurses.

Isolating the virus through cell culture has also been found to be time consuming.

Complicating efforts

Despite the breakthrough made by scientists in Canada, the World Health Organization's regional adviser on communicable disease surveillance and response said that efforts to devise a fool-proof method in detecting SARS cases early had been complicated by the presence of other microorganisms in blood samples taken from patients.

In an interview with Agence France Presse, Hitoshi Oshitani said it might have been easier to contain the SARS problem if it were only the coronavirus that was causing the illness.

"We have two main organisms, which make things more complicated. Probably, the coronavirus is a major player but we don't know the role of another virus, metapneumovirus, which has also been found in respiratory specimens and antibodies," Oshitani explained.

Scientists have also not found the origins of the coronavirus associated with SARS.

"The human coronavirus usually causes the common cold but what we found in patient samples is different than usual. It is also different from the animal coronavirus," he said.

Oshitani said that based on experience, identifying the cause of a disease and developing a laboratory diagnostic method usually took years.

"But because of this novel international collaboration involving 13 laboratories around the world, we managed to identify the major cause and develop a diagnostic method within a month. It's a very, very complicated issue," he said.

SARS fallout

While SARS continues to trouble the medical community, the fear unleashed by the outbreak has grounded large parts of the travel industry and cast a pall over business across Asia.

Hong Kong's flag carrier Cathay Pacific said 42 percent of its schedule had been cut as the SARS scare kept people from flying. The city's air authority said Sunday that 30 percent of flights in and out of Hong Kong had been canceled and that passenger numbers plummeted 60 percent in April. *(See related story in The World, Page A12.)*

Regional economic growth forecasts are being slashed, with the disease potentially costing billions of dollars in lost revenue, medical and welfare cost, and deferred investments.

Steve Brice, chief Southeast Asia economist at Standard Chartered Bank in Singapore, said that "basically we're seeing a significant downward revision of growth forecasts for countries like Singapore and Hong Kong."

Apart from outright spending on health, sanitation, quarantine and security measures, government budgets could face further pressure from the clamor for rescue packages and pump-priming measures to ease the effects of SARS.

International Monetary Fund chief economist Kenneth Rogoff said the effects of SARS could lower Asian growth by 0.25 percentage points if it lasts just three months. Private banks are already making sharper revisions.

The tourism industry—a lifeline for several regional countries—has suffered badly. The WHO has advised against non-essential travel to Hong Kong and Guangdong province of China. Many countries have issued similar travel advisories to their citizens.

"The situation is bad, and it's going to be tough for many, many companies," Saneh Roberto Jotikasathira, vice president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, told AFP.

Thai tourism revenues, he estimates, will be slashed by half in April, normally the industry's busiest period. *Reports from AFP and AP*

Boy with cancer gets wish

From page A1

The bishop asked the parishioners to extend their hands to the sick boy and pray for his "total healing." Those who attended the Mass also gave Tanggol a standing ovation.

Even as the attention was focused on him, Tanggol remembered another brother, who is confined at the Philippine General Hospital due to typhoid fever. "I am happy . . . (but) I hope my brother and I will get well," Tanggol said in an interview during a party for him after the Mass.

Tanggol is the fourth of six children of Bettina and Hector, who are both active members of the Immaculate Conception parish at the BF Resort in Parañaque.

As a tribute to the Holy Family, two of the children, including Tanggol, were named Jose. Three were named Maria and the youngest was named Jesus.

All are active in the parish either as altar boys or choir members. Tanggol assists the priests every Sunday, depending on his assignment. "We can't go anywhere because he is sick, so he just goes to church," Bettina said.

Last year, Tanggol stopped schooling. His cancer is in remission, but he has to undergo maintenance chemotherapy every two weeks until 2005.

Bettina had to quit her job to attend to Tanggol and use her retirement benefits for her son's medication. Her husband works for Couples for Christ and occasionally brokers car sales.

Due to financial difficulties, the family was not able to finance Tanggol's treatment the past years, according to Bettina. This was probably the reason his cancer came back.

Tanggol is the 208th kid whose wish was granted by the Make-a-Wish Foundation, a group dedicated to fulfilling the wishes of children with life-threatening illnesses.

Tanggol may also get his other wish. He is scheduled to go to Pizza Hut after a two-hour shopping spree at Toy Kingdom on April 27. He will share the toys with the children in his community as it is also his wish to make his playmates happy.

Gov't to foot medical bills of patients

From page A1

Hong Kong have to go through quarantine examination there and the same procedure will be repeated once they reach the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Bunye said.

Filipino workers based in Hong Kong are advised to present themselves for examination by doctors hired by the Philippine consulate there before heading home, he said.

"At the same time, the President is appealing to the sense of nationalism of our countrymen that if they feel something strange or are feeling weak, they should postpone their homecoming," Bunye said.

While the Philippines is not yet among the SARS-infected countries, it has joined the list of 30 nations with probable or suspected SARS cases.

On Friday, Ms Macapagal herself announced that a 64-year-old foreigner in the country had been treated of "probable" SARS infection and had recovered.

She ordered the further confinement of the unidentified patient for safety considerations. The patient was under voluntary quarantine "for the next few days in a private hospital," Bunye said.

He said the President's revelation was "just a reminder for our countrymen to take care although we're not yet SARS-infected."

"Our status technically is still SARS-free," Bunye said. "For us to be included in the SARS-infected list, there must be local or secondary transmission."

He did not give details except to say that "precautions have been taken so that the disease will not spread." *Carlito Pablo*

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Lenten season smells of 'tinapa' in Tarlac

From page A1

the unmistakable scent of *tinapa*. And if there's a curiously familiar "fog" about the place, too, you can bet on it.

At present, one-third of the village's 700 families earns a living by making smoked fish and selling them in stalls that line the national highway. But this week, the sniff trail goes all the way to the plaza, where a full-scale "Tinapa Festival" is ongoing.

Officials and residents say the celebration is meant to be a homage to the "humble commodity" that once saw them through dire straits. What better time to hold it, indeed, than *Semana Santa*, when many Filipinos stay away from meat?

If you like the delicacy and decide that it is worth a stopover on your way to wherever this brief period of abstinence brings you, you will be rewarded with an assortment that urban gourmets can only fantasize about. At the start of the festival on Friday, there weren't only the usual choices of *tamban, galunggong, salinas, kabasi* and *bangus*; there were also *tilapia, hasa-hasa* and tuna.

This despite the fact that Tarlac is a landlocked province with no natural source of marine products. The only fish variety here is *tilapia*, which is cultured in local fishponds; the rest come from Navotas in Metro Manila, Bataan and Dagupan City.

So how did this exultation of *tinapa* as nothing less than the town's economic emblem come about?

The way Talaga Barangay Chair Carlito Mariano tells it, the story is just a notch away from being a legend. "*Tinapa*-making sustained us through the very hard times of the 1960s. The skill never left us."

Leonardo Tullao, a native of Talaga, is said to have brought home the know-how from Bataan, where he worked in a *tinapa-an* shop.

At the time, Mariano recalled, Capas was one of the country's political hot spots. "We lived a very difficult life." But once started in their barangay, the smoked-fish enterprise immediately caught fire. One of those who took it seriously and never looked back was Mariano's mother.

"I remember being around her a lot, watching while she made *tinapa*," he said. "We got by. The whole village got by. Even those who merely arranged fish in the *bilao* (bamboo trays) got to take home some of the finished product."

They sold their produce in Angeles City, or in Barangay Dau in Mabalacat, Pampanga. Before they knew it, Talaga had become the region's *tinapa* center.

Bid to sell RP assets in Japan revived

From page A1

"It's because of the Roppongi experience. A July 1990 ruling of the Supreme Court said the Executive had no right to dispose of that property which the tribunal said was part of the public domain," Recto noted. As such, the high court ruled that the piece of land cannot just be alienated, transferred to another or sold.

Recto recalled that "when my uncle (the late Finance Secretary Jaime V. Ongpin) tried to sell the Roppongi property during the term of President Corazon Aquino, he got a lot of flak because of that idea of his."

"(For some people) it seems history is repeating itself. Some people have already made conclusions . . . That's sort of jumping the gun that just because you're selling one government property you are necessarily infringing on the national pride," said Recto.

He explained: "We couldn't sell, but we could make use of the properties by other means. There are other modes of disposition like joint ventures and build-operate-transfer schemes."

4 parcels

The 3,179-square-meter Roppongi property is one of four parcels of land acquired by Manila in 1958 as part of the Japanese indemnity for Philippine losses in life and property during World War II.

In 1990, Aquino pushed for the sale of the property to raise funds for the cash-strapped Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, her administration's centerpiece project. It would also have helped settle part of the country's foreign debt, then amounting to $31 billion.

The high court disallowed the sale, but it has since been leased out.

"Roppongi is done. But unknown to many the Roppongi experience was successful from the point of view of being able to convert what was then an underutilized property into one that's now overutilized. In fact, Roppongi is now short of space," Recto said.

With the partial leasing out of the Roppongi property, "the government didn't get substantial cash because we opted to get more space to house our embassy. We got some cash, some free space and the property reverts to us in 50 years. Not a bad deal," Recto said.

The two Tokyo properties now subject to disposition are located in mixed commercial-residential areas in Nampedai-machi and Fujimi, measuring about 2,500 sq.m. and 4,400 sq.m.

The two Kobe properties are smaller, "a total of 3,400 sq.m. for both lots," Recto said.

Recto said the four Japanese properties "have been on the table for a long time."

"The Privatization Council has been very public about it. That's something we've been talking about as well, not kept under wraps," contrary to claims by some administration critics, Recto said. The council is an attached agency of the Department of Finance.

He emphasized that "nothing will be lost and a lot could be gained by opting for transparency in the disposition of both the Japanese and US properties."

Needed funds

Just as in the Roppongi case in 1990, the Macapagal administration's plan to dispose of state-owned assets abroad is aimed at raising badly needed funds.

The council's guidelines on the disposition of idle state properties cited the government's "limited resources," among other reasons.

According to Recto, "the intention is to develop the Tokyo and Kobe properties along the line of the Roppongi, almost like BOT or build-operate-transfer."

Actually the government had decided as early as late 1990 to develop the Nampedai-machi and Fujimi properties, following the Supreme Court ruling that state-owned properties in Japan cannot be sold without congressional approval.

Development cost for the two lots was then estimated at 15.6 billion yen (roughly P2.5 billion in December 1990).

The Fujimi property, which houses a four-story building and the Philippine ambassador's residence, was then valued at about 7.7 million yen per sq.m., according to Asset Privatization Trust records.

The Nampedai-machi site hosts a two-story building and the Philippine Embassy. In 1988, the property was assessed at about 5.9 million yen per sq.m.

Sometime in 1991, a Japanese developer proposed to build a 14-story building with a two-level basement for parking in the Fujimi property.

In Nampedai-machi, a three-story building with basement parking and an apartment was supposed to have been built. Part of the building was supposed to have served as residential quarters for embassy staff.

The government projected earnings from rental and leasing fees of at least 68.4 billion yen during a 20-year period, once the properties were fully developed.

Recto said his "mandate is to ensure whatever effort is undertaken will have the greatest degree of transparency and fairness."

He referred to the guidelines on the disposition of idle state-owned properties his office had crafted, saying "there is a need for uniform, standard and consistent guidelines for the privatization procedure to ensure transparency and efficiency."

"My objective is to give the government the highest and the best value for its assets," Recto stressed. "I have no other marching orders," he added.

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THE SARS WAR: a mystery unfolds

More than the ongoing battle in Iraq, the whole world is seriously waging war against a mysterious killer disease: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). So far, reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) lists 17 countries affected by SARS around the world, gathering more than 2,000 victims, and more than a hundred deaths worldwide.

The SARS virus is believed to be contracted through droplets - by direct physical contact with infected persons or through contact with contaminated objects. Droplets are vapor that come out of the mouth when a person coughs, sneezes, or by merely talking.

Mystery solved?
The good news is that laboratory experts have identified a possible cause of the silent enemy - a new strain of the coronavirus. WHO, along with 11 other laboratories around the world, is now continuously conducting diagnostic tests and possible treatment to control this virus and eventually treat SARS patients.

DOH: alert and ready
Health departments in several countries including the Philippines have been applying precautionary measures in preparation of possible outbreaks. The Philippine Department of Health reports that there has been no sign of SARS infection in the country so far. However, the San Lazaro Hospital and the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine are prepared to take in possible SARS patients.

DOH advisories recommend travelers, particularly those coming from affected areas like Hong Kong, China, Vietnam, and Singapore, to remain at their homes for at least 7 days to check for SARS symptoms. Symptoms include fever higher than 38°C for three days, followed by dry cough and difficulty in breathing.

Alcohol: a possible ally
With the identification of coronavirus as a possible source of SARS, it is advisable to use 70% Isopropyl Alcohol to disinfect hands. Using 70% Isopropyl Alcohol has been proven to control common viruses like the coronavirus. The public is also advised to prevent SARS infection by wearing masks with filter if he or she is in direct physical contact with a suspected SARS-infected person.

SARS may have done great damage and cost many lives, but the world is gearing up for intensive defense through global scientific cooperation.

For inquiries, call DOH IWAS SARS Hotline: 741-7048 or 743-1937 or text: 0916-4665823.

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Elementary grad misses mom held hostage by Abu Sayyaf

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Unless a miracle happens, 12-year-old Jeizel must accept that his mother won't make it to his graduation today.

This is because his mother, Cleofe Montulo, remains a captive of Abu Sayyaf bandits in Sulu. Still, Jeizel wishes to see his mother attending his graduation.

He said his mother was his inspiration as she could bring the whole family together during difficult times.

Jeizel was supposed to finish his elementary studies with honors, but his grades went down during the second period of the school year after his mother was kidnapped last year.

Yvonne Montulo, an aunt, said Jeizel was able to maintain an average grade of only 85 percent. She described her nephew as "very silent, studious, religious and very serious in life."

Cleofe, her sister-in-law Florida and two other herbal medicine vendors Nori Bendijo and Emily Mantic were kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu on Aug. 20, 2002. They are members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their two male companions were beheaded by the bandits a day after the abduction.

The young Jeizel had to work to help his ailing father Benjamin, who earns a living by selling fruit juices to neighbors and to students at different elementary schools. Benjamin occasionally receives tailoring work, but he cannot keep the job because he is suffering from pancreatitis and gall bladder infection.

Jeizel sells bottled water at the Zamboanga port. "I usually earn as much as P50 for about five hours of peddling," he said. His income becomes his and younger brother Neil's daily *"baon"* (allowance). What is left of the P50 goes to school projects.

Jeizel said his life would have been different if his mother was around, "because I don't need to work." He said "it (is) so difficult to earn money."

Yvonne recalled that Cleofe was a hardworking mother. "When my brother (Benjamin) got seriously ill, she worked 24 hours a day to feed her children and bring medicine for Manong Ben."

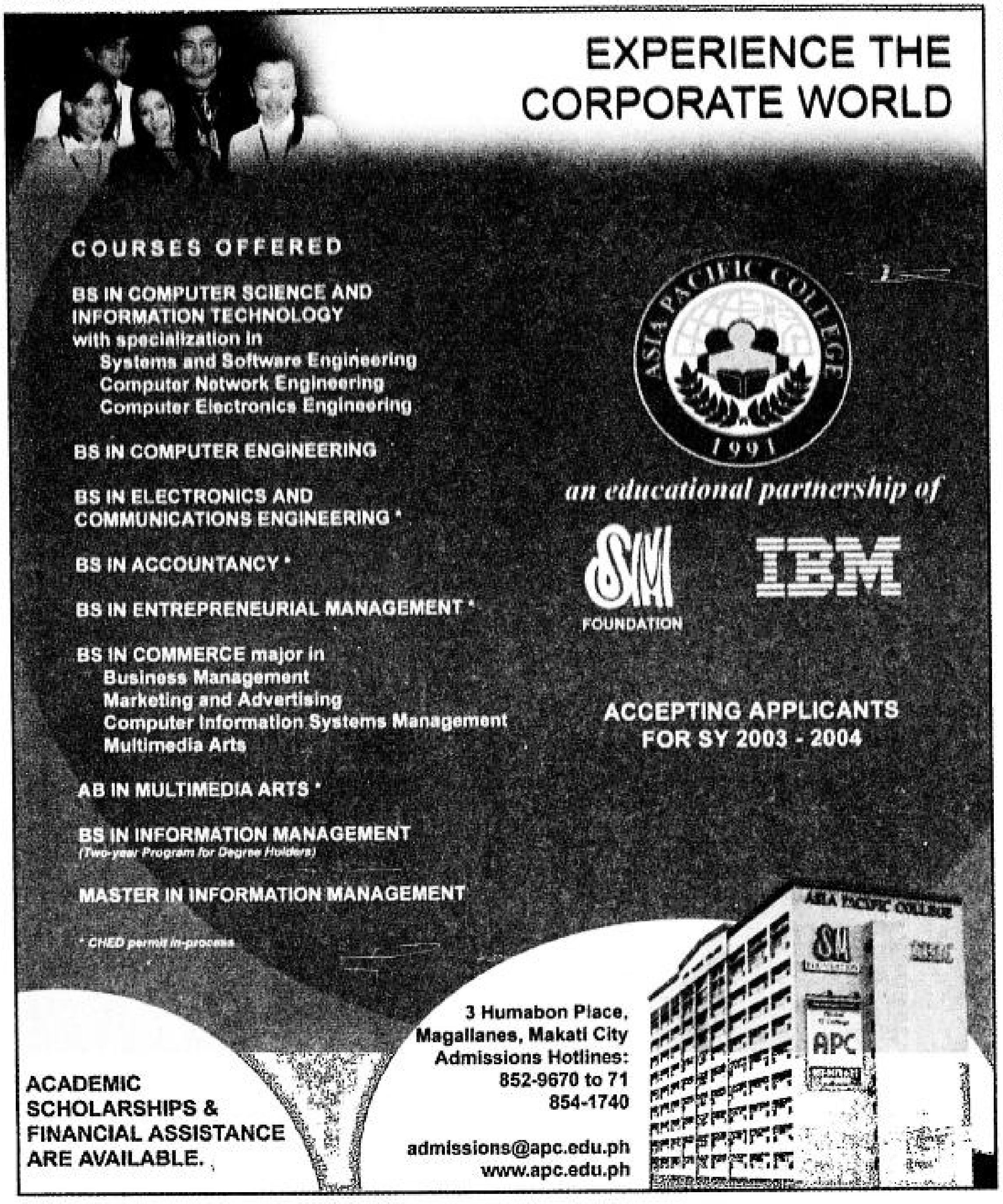
Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko assured the Montulos that "Cleofe, Florida and those two others are safe and alive." He based his statement on revelations of escaped Indonesian hostages Pieter Lerrich and Julkifli.

"We will do our best. We have the best officers in the field who could accomplish such tasks, though it's quite difficult because the Abu Sayyaf keeps on moving its captives, but we will catch them," Kyamko said.

The Montulos said the kidnappers, led by a Kumander Jimmy, had demanded an undetermined amount for the four captives' board and lodging. "We cannot give anything. We cannot even buy a kilo of rice; what more the board and lodging fee," he said.

Jeizel's message for Kumander Jimmy: "We don't have money. I've been working hard to help my family. Please release our mother."

If his wish is granted, Jeizel said: "I will kiss her and embrace her and I will bring her home so that she can rest. I will feed her so that she will regain her strength."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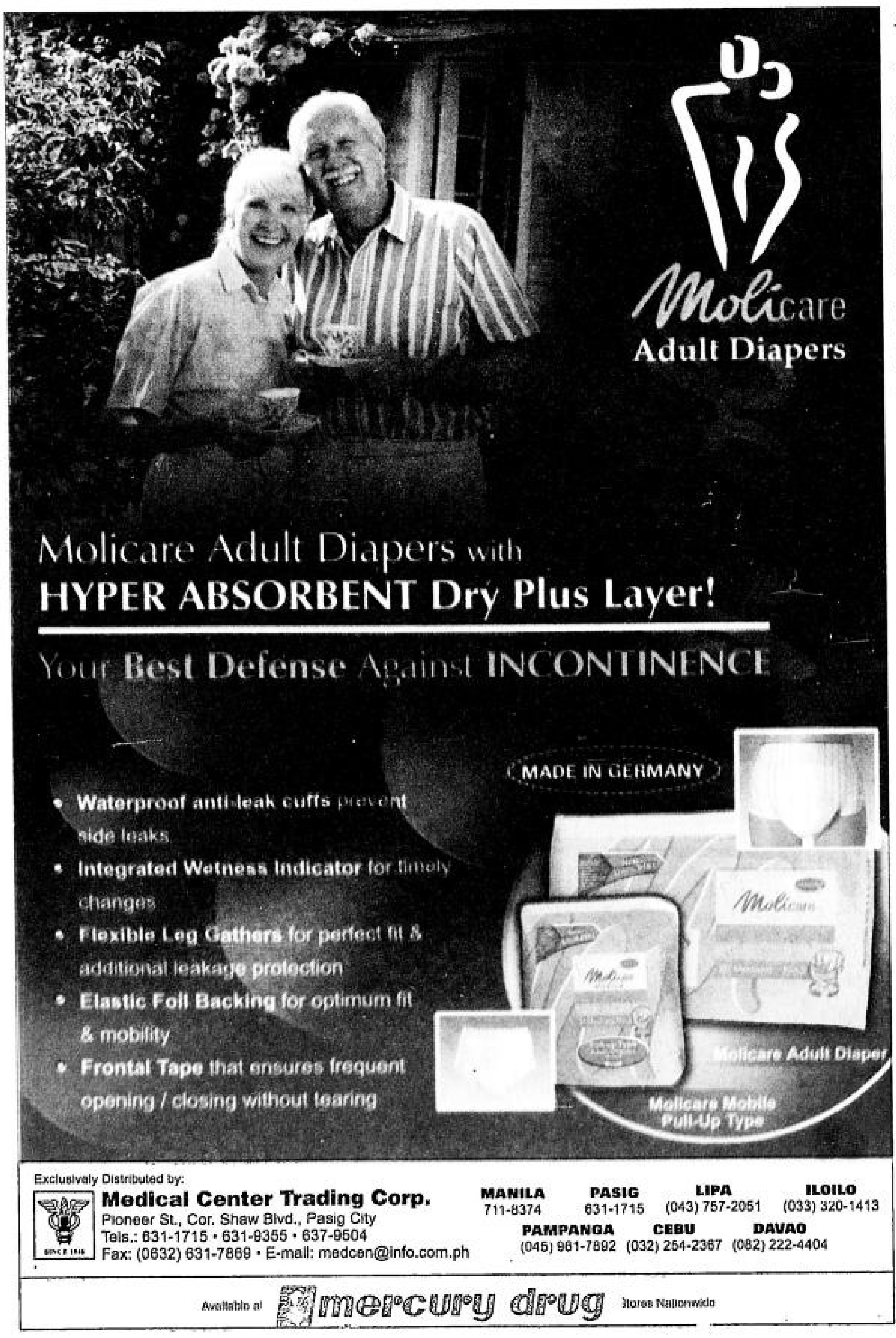
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SOME of the first Aeta graduates of the Pastolan Elementary School in Pastolan Village, Hermosa, Bataan light candles during their graduation ceremony last April 3.

ALLAN MACATUNO/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

Aeta village proud of its grads

From page A1

both work as grass cutters.

Bautista said she was determined to finish high school and college to attain a "desirable degree."

"We know that there is a big world out there, a big world beyond high school and college. An uncertain future awaits us but we are not afraid to meet the challenge," she said in her valedictory speech.

The salutatorian, Joy de la Junta, also 13, said finishing her elementary education was the first step in realizing her dream of becoming a teacher someday. She said she wanted to become the first Aeta teacher in their community.

De la Junta's parents work as forest guides.

"We are very happy that after six years of study, we have completed our elementary education, but we are also sad that we will now leave our school," she said.

Every Aeta in the community, especially the younger generation, has the right to attend school and be educated, according to De la Junta.

"We, graduates, should challenge ourselves to be leaders in the community. We must strive to achieve our ambitions. Though education is expensive, let not poverty be an excuse," she said in her speech.

Better life

Florentino Bonifacio, tribal chieftain, said the graduates have given the Aeta community hope for a better life.

He urged the students to use their education as a "weapon" in fighting for their rights.

"As their village chief, I am giving them my full support until they finish their studies. I advise them to never get tired of learning new things so that they can defend their rights," Bonifacio said in Filipino.

Edmond de Jesus, social development specialist of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Ecology Center, said the SBMA was helping the Aeta community by paying the salaries of teachers at the Pastolan Elementary School.

He said the Aetas in Pastolan Village, most of them unschooled, were finding hope and courage through their children who are able to have a "good and formal education."

"The parents of these 18 graduates are really happy to see their children complete their elementary education. They cannot help but cry because they feel that finally, their children will not grow up illiterate," De Jesus said.

Amethya de la Llana, chief of the SBMA Ecology Center, said the first batch of Aeta graduates of the school would always be remembered.

"You will be a part of the history of Pastolan Village. I'm sure that many children will follow your good example of perseverance and courage. You will be the first ones to defend the rights of your community," De la Llana said.

"Competition is everywhere but as an Aeta, you should prove to them that you can make it to the top."

In 1998, the SBMA Ecology Center formulated the Indigenous People's Development Program for the Pastolan Aeta community.

Magkonana tribe

The Aeta here belong to the Magkonana tribe of Zambales and Bataan that had laid claim to huge areas of the Subic freeport long before the Spanish occupation.

Some 150 Aeta families live in the village. They have opted to live in a community where they can practice their own social system and establish their own livelihood. They survive using the resources of the surrounding forests.

The SBMA health and welfare group provides the community with medical and dental assistance. Being "experts" on the jungle, they are tapped by the SBMA as forest rangers and forest guides.

The Pamulaklakin Forest Trails and the Jungle Environmental and Survival Training Camp provide them with additional livelihood through cultural demonstrations, forest tours and maintenance of picnic areas.

JOY de la Junta, the class salutatorian, gives her father a kiss. ALLAN MACATUNO/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

SPORTSWATCH

Asian F3 slated

FOLLOWING the cancellation of the first leg of the Asian Formula 3 Series at Malaysia's Johor Circuit due to the SARS scare, teams and drivers started preparations for the second leg which is slated on May 10 and 11 at the newly refurbished Subic International Raceway. Expected to figure prominently in the Philippine rounds of the series sponsored by Pagcor and promoted by Colby Ventures, are Castrol Team Goddard with Ambi Pur teammates Mark Goddard–the Manila based Briton and defending 2001 champion and 2001 Philippine F3 champion Jojo Silverio. Expected to crowd them are 2002 Asian Formula Renault Champion Enzo Pastor, who is taking over the seat vacated by Silverio at Team Tom's Asia; Pepon Marave of the Shell Marave Racing Team; Richard Joson of Team Denso JF3 and JP Tuason of the newly organized Speedtech Asia.

Air Force prevails

PHILIPPINE Air Force finally emerged champion in the Gentxt–8th National Beach Football Luzon Cup which in the past has been the domain of Philippine Army after beating the defending champions 4-1 to earn a trip to the national finals in Boracay next month. Earlier, PAF booted out Mama Sita 4-1 in the semifinals while Army edged out El Magistrado 2-1 to advance to the finals of the two day tournament held at Subic and sponsored by Gatorade, Viva Mineral Water, Centrum, and Computer Minds, supported by the SBMA, National Sports Grill and the Philippine Sports Commission.

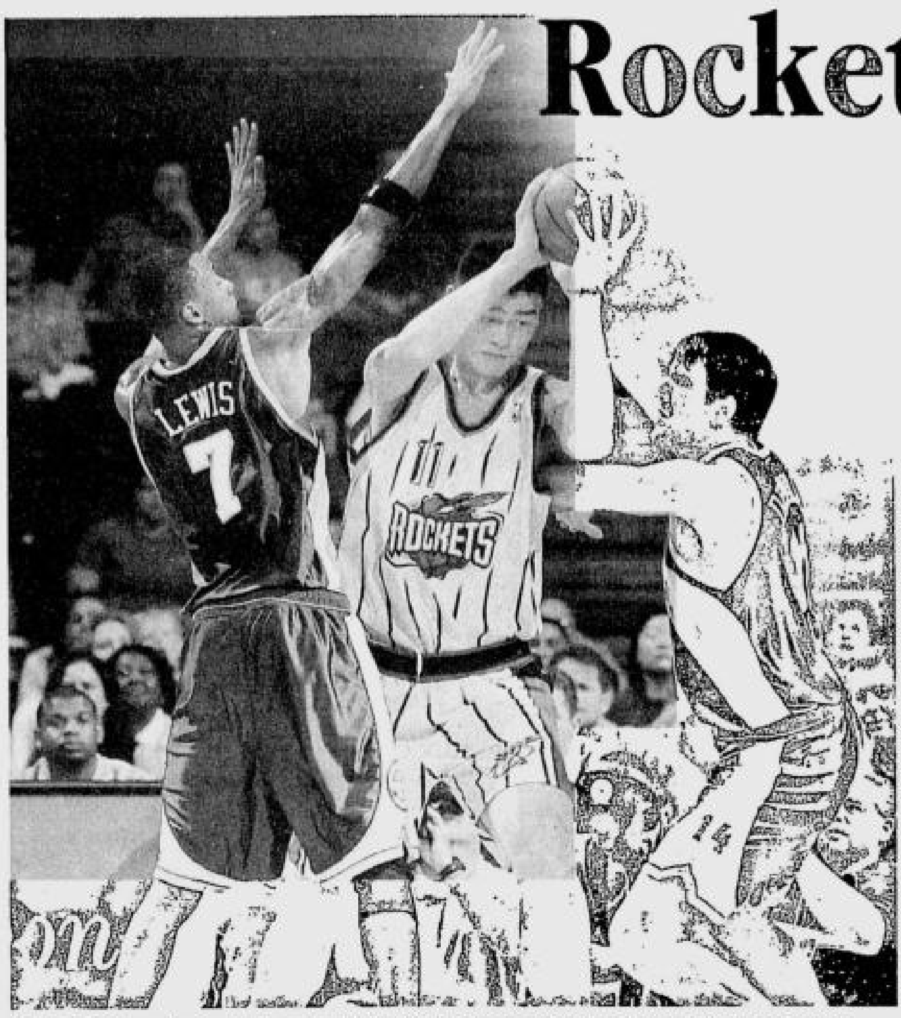
Lagon solo champion

COCKER-breeder Sonny Lagon continued his domination of the local derby circuit as he adds another feather on his cap via solo championship performance in the just concluded Biboy Enriquez 5-Cock Derby held at the Pampanga Coliseum. It was in the same cockpit more than just a week ago during a 5-cocker hosted by Patrick Antonio wherein Lagon just came short of bagging solo victory after suffering a big upset in his last fight. Fielding his signature lines of Blue Blade Sweater crosses, Lagon's entry loss on its seventh fight for a solo runner-up finish during the Battle of Giants one-day 7-Cock Derby at the Mandaluyong Sports Coliseum hosted by Col. Carding Dapat.

Royals surge to 9-0

CLEVELAND—Nine up, nine down for the perfect Kansas City Royals. The Royals extended baseball's best start in 13 years as Raul Ibañez and Michael Tucker hit two-run homers Saturday to lead the Royals to a 5-2 win over the Cleveland Indians. At an unlikely 9-0, the Royals are the majors' only undefeated team and are the first club since the 1990 Cincinnati Reds to win its first nine games. Those Reds went on to win the World Series. It would be hard to imagine the small-market Royals duplicating that, but no one predicted their fast start, either–especially after they went 62-100 last season. *AP*

Rockets stay alive



SEATTLE SuperSonics Rashard Lewis (left) and Predrag Drobnjak double team Houston Rockets' Yao Ming in the first quarter. AFP

HOUSTON—Cuttino Mobley and Steve Francis both scored 17 points to lead Houston to a 101-86 win over the Seattle SuperSonics in the NBA Saturday, keeping slim playoff hopes alive for the Rockets.

The Rockets will be eliminated from the post-season with one more loss or one more Phoenix win.

Houston stayed alive for at least one more day thanks to 50 percent shooting from the field.

Mobley scored 13 of his 17 points in the third quarter.

Seven Rockets hit double figures, including Eddie Griffin and Glen Rice, who both had 15 points. Yao Ming added 10 points for Houston.

Brent Barry had 23 points to lead Seattle while Rashard Lewis added 19. It was the fourth game in five nights for Seattle, which closed to within 50-48 at the half.

But a 25-5 run by the Rockets early in the third quarter put the game out of reach.

In Washington, Ira Newble's dunk off an offensive dribble with eight seconds left gave the Atlanta Hawks a 101-100 triumph over the Wizards.

Michael Jordan had 17 points in 30 minutes for the Wizards, including a go-ahead basket with 18 seconds remaining. But he missed the game's final shot, a 20-footer that would have given Washington the win.

Newble and Jason Terry both scored 21 points for Atlanta.

Christian Laettner had 18 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Wizards.

In Orlando, Tracy McGrady bagged 37 points as the Magic edged the Boston Celtics 89-86.

Nifty present

Meanwhile, Jordan and Patrick Ewing gave a nifty retirement present to Washington assistant John Bach–a new Rolls-Royce.

"I'm terribly happy and utterly surprised," said the 77-year-old coach, who is retiring from coaching after 50 years.

Ewing and Jordan shocked Bach before Saturday night's game against the Atlanta Hawks when they suggested the entire team go down to the arena's garage. *AP*

COMPLETE RESULTS

ORLANDO 89, Boston 86; New Jersey 94, Toronto 86; Atlanta 101, Washington 100; Cleveland 104, New York 99 (OT); Dallas 117, Golden State 108; Houston 101, Seattle 86; LA Clippers 101, Denver 79

Supreme irony

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

ISN'T it ironic that while the country's health and sport officials are asking Philippine athletic delegations to forego their travels and compete in SARS-infected countries, the NSAs (national sports associations) in table tennis, basketball, softball and athletics are inviting athletes from China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam, the countries most affected by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, to play here and mingle with us? What's with these people?

"The public is at risk," said a World Health Organization expert recently. "We have to be vigilant and concerned for the people's health and safety. SARS is now a global threat."

Because of this, the Philippine government has postponed a scheduled visit to the country of a 100-member Chinese delegation headed by Wu Bangguo, a ranking member of China's parliament. Wu was slated to meet with House Speaker Jose de Venecia from May 6 to 12. There are also plans to postpone a three-day visit here of Vietnamese Vice President Truoan My Hoa starting on April 27.

Earlier, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho announced the postponement of the 7th Asean finance ministers meeting to be hosted by the Philippines for the first time on April 21-26.

"A lot of people have become uncomfortable due to the spread of SARS and they agree that we should postpone the meeting," said Camacho.

As of yesterday, SARS has killed at least 120 people and infected more than 3,000 across Asia and around the world. Worse, there is no known cure for the flu-like disease.

"I think we have to assume that the (SARS) virus is in Asia to stay," said Dr. Jim Hughes, chief of infectious diseases at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

No wonder many people are not buying the decision of local organizers to persist in hosting these Asian tournaments here, saying these sports organizers should follow instead the example of their government leaders who called off and/or reset these important events even though preparations have already started many months in advance.

Thames International Business School delivers its promise:
Studying abroad made reachable for Filipinos

"Filipinos can afford studying abroad. I didn't think it was possible at first, but here I am now." This was the remark made by Jojan Juson, one of Thames International Business School's (Thames) students completing her degree in the UK. Jojan is taking up Business and Information Technology in the University of Portsmouth (UK) and will be part of only a handful of Filipinos to finish college abroad...at least for now.

A few years ago, a high quality college degree from a reputable university abroad was close to unreachable. This was mainly due to the high cost of tuition and the cost of living overseas; only those who had the resources were able to go.

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Students take the first two years locally, and finish the final 1 – 2 years in any of the affiliate universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or the US. This year, the Thames community eagerly awaits the next batch of graduates from the UK.

With the innovative system of Thames, students are taught "how to think" and not "what to think".

Thames, with its innovative system and globally recognized curriculum effectively cut the cost of a foreign degree in half.

Students are bound to know not only the theories but also the application of the concepts learned in class.

To prepare the students for a challenging life abroad, they are groomed to better adjust in a different country. They go through leadership seminars and are subjected to high-impact values-formation activities that develop strength of character. A challenging atmosphere and a culture of excellence is also promoted within campus walls; from the professors, to the classrooms, to the lessons taught. "We prepare the students to become challenge oriented," explains Thames' Director, Mr. Joel Santos. "Only when they are prepared mentally and emotionally will they be able to excel overseas."

More than a school, Thames has effectively become a community, a microcosm of the world that the students and teachers move in. Once in the UK, the earlier batches help the newer students adjust to life abroad.

Earlier this year, a new batch of students from Thames left the country to pursue their dreams of earning a foreign degree. "We are extremely proud of the performance of our students in the UK. We have received word from our affiliates that they are doing very well, and are performing admirably," says Thames' President, Vivienne Tan. She is confident that the future batches will be able to excel as their earlier counterparts too. "It is a dream come true not only for the students, but for us educators as well, to see them go abroad. Because we feel that for every fulfilled dream is a fulfilled promise from us to provide a better way of earning quality education overseas," Tan ended.

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For more information about Thames and possible scholarship oppurtunities, interested students and parents can visit the Thames Eastwood Campus, or call 687-4736 to 37.

Below is a partial list of Thames students currently studying abroad:

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Australia	
JR FAJARDO	Central Queensland University
MARICAR MILAN	Central Queensland University
MICHELLE GO	University of Southern Queensland
MABELLE GENEVIEVE ANG	Curtin University of Technology
United Kingdom	
JEDFREY TAN	University of Portsmouth
CHRISTIAN PAUL CHAN	Middlesex University
CHRISTIAN AUGUSTUSS BERGARA	University of Portsmouth
JOJAN PAULA JUSON	University of Portsmouth
JEREMY NGAW	University of Portsmouth
JENNY ONG	University of Portsmouth
MARCAINE NG	University of Hertfordshire
SHAINA REGINA SAMIA	University of Hertfordshire
MA. THERESA LEUNG	University of Portsmouth
ROSEMARIE BONIFACIO	Middlesex University
RONA LISSA GUINTO	Oxford Brookes University
MELVIN GAW	Oxford Brookes University
MARINA SURLA	University of Portsmouth
KERRI GAIL ONG	University of Portsmouth
JOHN JOSEPH PEREZ	University of Hertfordshire
GAMALIEL GABRIENTO	University of Plymouth
ELEAZAR LAMPA	University of Portsmouth
ALVIN TAN	University of Hertfordshire
RICHARD FRANCIS PANGANIBAN	University of Portsmouth
JOHN PACIFIC CASTRO	University of Hertfordshire
ANWILLSUN SO	Oxford Brookes University
MARK SENG	Middlesex University
ALEXANDER APOLLO ARELLANO	University of Portsmouth
ABIGAIL PENALOSA	University of Portsmouth
MA. KATRINA VILLARICO	Coventry University
TEDDY CHENG	Thames Valley University
IELEEN ELIZABETH DELA CRUZ	University of Hertfordshire
DEEPTI SELOPAL	Middlesex University
JASMINE NGO	Oxford Brookes University
ANDERSON TAN	Oxford Brookes University
KRISTINE BARANGAN	Middlesex University

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Venue: Thames Eastwood Campus

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Maggert up; Tiger 4 off

From page A24

gave him a four-shot cushion at the rain-delayed tournament's halfway point, led for most of round three before he was overtaken on the back nine by a fast-finishing Maggert.

Weir, who found the water at the par-five 13th, also bogeyed 16 and 17 as he lost momentum while Maggert, who birdied five of the last six holes, vaulted to the top of the leaderboard with a six-under-par 66.

The 39-year-old Maggert, who was third at last year's US.

Open, finished on five-under 211, having begun his round seven off the lead.

Weir carded a three-over 75 and had to settle for second place at three under, one stroke clear of 2001 U.S. PGA champion David Toms and 2000 Masters winner Vijay Singh, who produced matching rounds of 70 to finish on 214.

Jose Maria Olazabal, winner at Augusta in 1994 and 1999, fired a second successive 71 to join Woods at one under, along with Phil Mickelson, who carded a level-par 72 as he chased his first major title in his 43rd start.

Saturday is traditionally known as "moving day" in major championships and, in the sun-baked conditions at Augusta National, Woods responded by relentlessly moving into contention for the first of the year's four majors.

Chasing his ninth career major, Woods completed a second-round 73 in the morning that just kept him in the tournament at five over– and 11 strokes off the lead.

The last time he failed to play the final two rounds of a major was at the 1996 Masters as an amateur.

He has now gone 102 tournaments without missing the cut, the third best record on the PGA Tour after Byron Nelson, on 113, and Jack Nicklaus, on 105.

Woods struggled with his putter during the second round but he hit back with three birdies in his first six holes after teeing off at the 10th.

He holed a 50-foot putt for birdie at the par-four 11th, and then took full advantage of the two par fives on the back nine, collecting birdies on 13 and 15 to move to three under for his round.

"I made a big putt there on 11 and got something going," said Woods. "Today I knew, if I could just get things going, that I could get back in this tournament." Further birdies at the second, the par-three sixth and the seventh lifted him to one under overall, and he lipped out from 12 feet with his seventh birdie attempt at the ninth, his last.

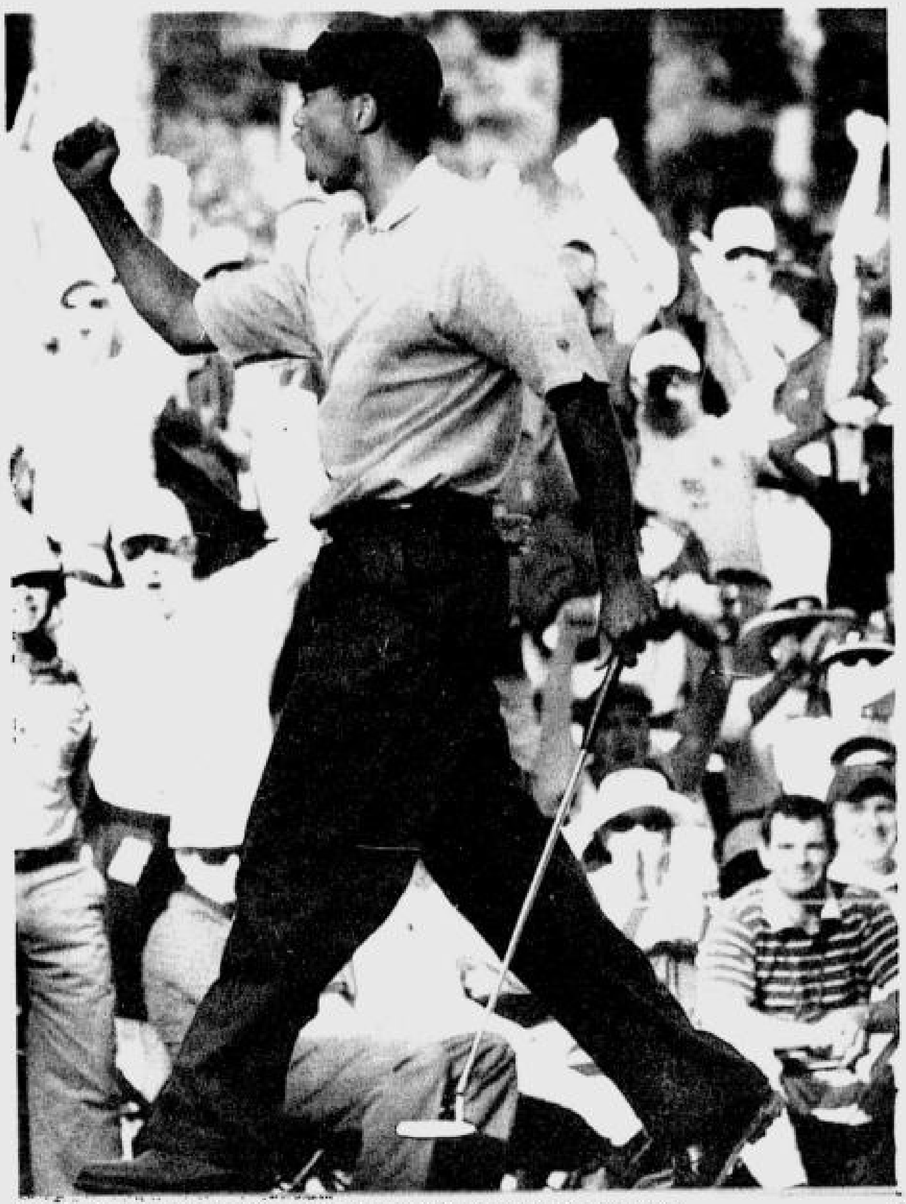
British Open champion Ernie Els, tied for 10th at the tournament's halfway stage, surged into a share of third place at one under par after 11 holes before a late stumble.

The world number two had fired a superb six-under-par 66 to make the halfway cut after opening with a 79, and launched round three in roller-coaster fashion.

He bogeyed the first, birdied the second and then dropped another shot at the par-three fourth before closing to within six of the lead when he holed out from 148 yards for an eagle-two at the seventh. *Reuters*

3rd round scores:

211–Jeff Maggert 72-73-66
213–Mike Weir 70-68-75
214–Vijay Singh 73-71-70, David Toms 71-73-70
215–Tiger Woods 76-73-66, Jose Maria Olazabal 73-71-71, Phil Mickelson 73-70-72
216–Jim Furyk 73-72-71, Len Mattiace 73-74-69, Jonathan Byrd 74-71-71
217–Rich Beem 74-72-71, Mark O'Meara 76-71-70, Ernie Els 79-66-72, KJ Choi 76-69-72, Fred Couples 73-75-69, Nick Price 70-75-72, Paul Lawrie 72-72-73, Ricky Barnes (amateur) 69-74-75
218–Hunter Mahan (amateur) 73-72-73, Tim Clark 72-75-71, Angel Cabrera 76-71-71, Chris Riley 76-72-70. *Reuters*



WOODS celebrates making a birdie on the 6th hole in the third round. AP

Wolny, Saudi netters triumph

DIMINUTIVE Nikki Wolny and her Saudi Arabian-based Dhuran Junior Tennis Association (DJTA) teammates Aalok Mehta and Natasha Rizyi continued their victorious run in the 2003 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop yesterday at the Olivarez Sports Center indoor courts.

Wolny ousted Jasmine Tan Ho, 6-1, 6-3, to barge into the quarterfinal of the unisex 12-under division, while Mehta and and Rizyi demolished Kyle Cordero, 6-3, 6-0, and Juan Opulencia, 6-0, 6-0, respectively in the Milo netfest organized by Children's Tennis Workshop and supported by Wilson balls, adidas and Sports Kids with a Group-2 Philta sanction.

Ah Rizyi, another netter of DJTA coach Aziz Raseed, had edged Edwin Olivarez, 6-4, 7-6, in they boys 14-under bracket before falling to Tannie Apacible, 6-4, 6-2, in the boys 12-under class.

Tabuena heads jr. Tour cast

By Jong Arcano

MIGUEL Tabuena makes his debut in the Samsung Jungolf Tour today at the Faldo course of the sprawling Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club expected to get all the adulation from his peers for a job well-done last week in Kuching, Malaysia.

The little prince of local jungolf will be the hot favorite in the Class E (8 years and under), his confidence boosted by a sensational stint in the Sarawak Junior World Masters where he dethroned the defending champion in runaway fashion and even outscored the taller, bigger Class D entries.

Tabuena flew back Friday and wasted no time preparing for his next outing where the International School grade schooler gets to face familiar rivals like Bino dela Paz and JR Gonzales.

All of the big names in the five age-group classifications are in the field of 120 players who registered for the 54-hole tilt serving as the second leg of the Samsung Tour also given major backing by Philippine Airlines, Airlift Asia, Air Liquide Phils., Global Lighting and Exito Manufacturing.

Champions of last week's well-attended John Hay leg, meanwhile, are out to score repeat victories.

They are Ian Rey Intal and Katrina Gonzales in Class A (15-17 years), Magnum Bakunawa and Gerileen Handog in Class B (13-14), Jordan Mamaril and Mia Piccio in Class C (11-12), Dottie Ardina and Wolen Juan Superal in Class D (9-10) and Dela Paz and Christina Potenciano in Class E (8-under).

Wilson Sports Philippines through its general manager Jun Jun Plana is boosting the prize package of the event as the equipment sponsor for the leg.

Meanwhile, Gerry Handog, president of the organizing Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines, said yesterday that Most Valuable Player awards will be given to the best jungolfer during the summer circuit of the year.

Ateneo bet wins crown

BAGUIO CITY—Ateneo's Pocholo Macalino took the spotlight by beating Leander Lazaro, 6-4, 2-6, 6-3, recently to annex the unisex 10-under title in the Juntaphil Cup at the Baguio Tennis Club here.

Macalino notched his fourth title, including the Philta Classics in Angeles City and San Pablo City. He was runner-up in the Andrada Cup and Head-Penn Manila Polo Club leg.

The boys' 21-under title went to Ian de Guzman, who beat Jet Tangalin, 7-5, 6-2, while Olongapo City bet Nico Riego de Dios defeated local Jet Tangalin, 6-2, 6-2, for the 18-under title.

Archers seek repeat over Eagles in golf dual meet

THE LA SALLE Green Archers will try to keep possession of the Ambassador Valdes Cup when they clash with the Ateneo Blue Eagles anew in the 16th edition of their annual golf dual meet which will be co-hosted by Canlubang and Manila Golf on May 6-8.

In addition to the traditional age-group competition, this year's jubilarians (HS' 78) are planning to include a special side-event following the Ryder Cup format to spice up the competition chiefly sponsored by PLDT, Smart Pepsi and Taylor Made.

The side-event is to feature 32 of the best players of the contending schools competing under a match play format with the results also contributing points to the overall standing.

The tentative lineup for La Salle: Paul Salvador, Tony Olives, Raffy Garcia, Abe Rosal, Ronnie Littaua, Richie Garcia, Dan Salvador III, JR Tanpinco, Caloy Coscoluella, Alex Montelibano, and Francis Gaston.

The Ateneo side is bannered by Kit Lopez, Jingy Tuason, Mari Hechanova, Iggy Clavecilla, Bong Brobio, Jeric Hechanova, Junjun Plana, Pepot Inigo, Joel Opaco and Manoling Chan.

The three-day, two-course format should give way to faster play and improved scoring.

On May 6, senior division (60 years and above) entries will tee off at Manila Golf Club and the rest at Canlubang Golf and Country Club where ages 50-59 play at the South, ages 19 and below as well as the Ladies Division at the North. On May 7, the 40-44 bracket will be at the south and 30-39 at the north and on May 8, those in the 45-49 level will be at the south and the 20-29 at the north.

The same modified blind Callaway format will be applied in the tournament.

Hilado tilt listing on

REGISTRATION is now open for the Luis Hilado Memorial Cup age-group tennis tournament slated April 21-27 at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Players who wish to join may contact Loida Mallare (tel. no. 525-6434). Deadline of entry is on April 15 at 5 p.m.

The Philta-sanctioned group 2 event offers 120 points to the winners.

'Ratratan' 4-cock derby gets going

ACE promoter Bobbit Ples presents the "Rabatitat Ratratan sa Cavite Super 4-Cock Derby" at 5 p.m. today at the Cavite Coliseum. A total of 96 matches are on tap.

The big field of participants will be bannered by two-time international champion William Go, engineer Sonny Lagon of the famous Blue Blade Farms, Ronald Singson, brothers Bong Revilla and Marlon Bautista, Alan Tan, former ambassador Danding Cojuangco, Mandaluyong 9-Cock champion Jun Marasigan, lawyer Rudy Salud, Lito Orillaza and Vice Mayor Nestor Mercado, OPMI president Vic YU, RB Binangonan, Mayor Vic Amante, Gov. Antonio Kho of Masbate, Gerry Ramos, Louie Cua, Charlie, William Co, Mayor Ashley Arayata, Agilawin Group, Emitte San Juan of California, among others.

For details, call 046-9709971 or 046-5021484.

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(In exact order)

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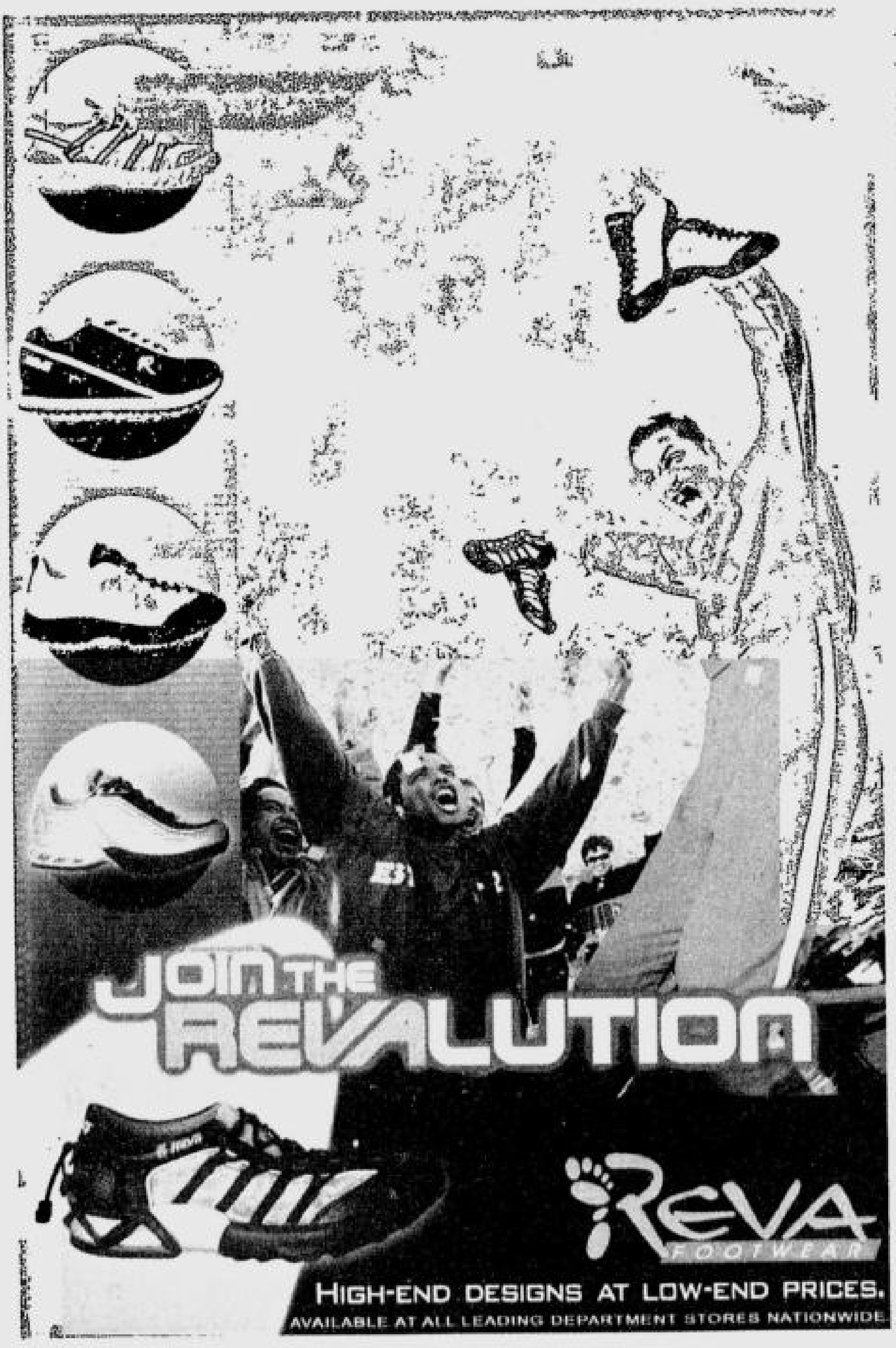

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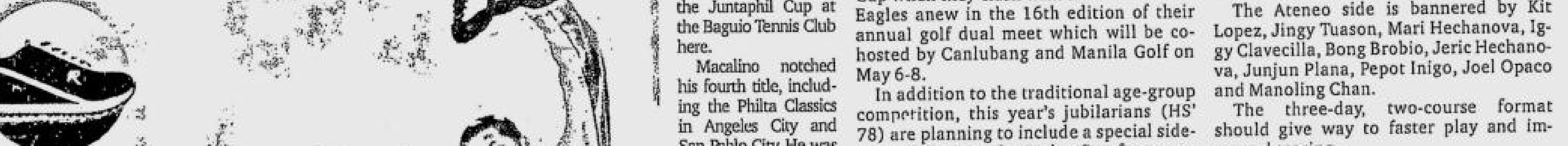


Thunder rout Kings, 105-97

Yeng's wards post 8th straight win

GAMES WEDNESDAY *(Philsports Arena)*
5:00 p.m.—FedEx vs San Miguel
7:30 p.m.—Talk N Text vs Sta. Lucia

By June Navarro

ANOTHER painful night for Eric "Major Pain" Menk and the Barangay Ginebra Kings.

Batang Red Bull wasted the monstrous efforts of Menk as the Thunder streaked to their eighth straight victory with a lopsided 105-97 win over the Kings last night in the Samsung-PBA All Filipino Cup at the Philsports Arena.

Menk, one of only five players in the league who continue to register a double-double performance every outing, barreled his way to 38 points and 10 rebounds in an almost no-relief game.

"Terrible. I dunno what's causing these setbacks. We folded again and it's very, very frustrating," said a visibly fagged out Menk.

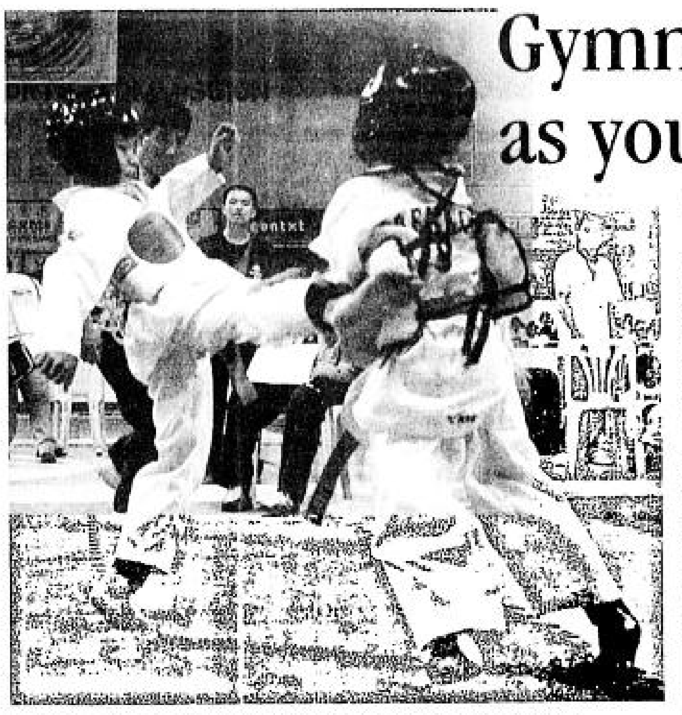
"I'm not happy. We'd like to win this one but we didn't and that bothers me a lot," the 1999 rookie of the year added.

Jimwell Torion, Willie Miller and the all-around offensive firepower of Red Bull caused Menk's frustration as the Thunder cemented their hold of the lead in Group B with a 9-1 record.

"We're not concerned with the win streak anymore. We're now experimenting on defense and different player combinations. Fortunately, it's working for us," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao, whose Thunder have now beaten every team in town.

As the Thunder cut loose early in the fourth quarter, Guiao had the luxury of fielding all of his men with seldom-used players like Nelson Asaytono, Anton Villoria and Vince Hizon joining the scoring fray.

The Kings have now lost three games in a row and fell to 3-7. They are in danger of sharing the cellar with the Shell Turbochargers (2-8). *With a report from Alaine Lou Antonio*



DEN Joscar Vison of Cenral Gym (left) connects against Kevin Velasquez of Manila Taekwondo Club (left) during the taekwondo competitons of the 2nd Manila Youth Games. Vison won. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Gymnasts take limelight as youth sportsfest ends

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A COUPLE of young gymnasts from A. Herrera Elementary School bagged four gold medals each to share the spotlight at the close of the 2nd Manila Youth Games yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Gymnastics Center.

Mage Wagan and Rizza Desiree Garcia, both 12 years old topped the hoop, ball, rope and individual all-around events in the category 1 level 2-B (advance group) and category 1 level 1 (novice group), respectively, of the rhythmic gymnastics competition.

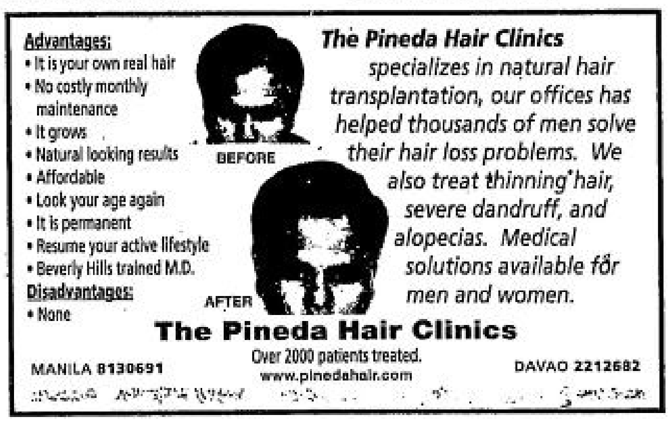
In category 1 level 2-A (beginners' group), Rachelyn Astillar of Bo. Obrero Elementary School also snared all four gold medals in the hoop, ball, rope and individual all-around.

Meanwhile, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Manila Sports Council Chair Ali Atienza expressed high hopes for the city's youth and future in sports after the successful staging of the sportsfest supported by Philippine Sports Commission, Pagcor, WG&A Superferry, Globe Telecoms, Viva Mineral Water, Power Aid, Victor Sports and Pressworks.

SPORTSTV

Compiled by Lorenzo Manguiat

GOLF: 2003 US Masters, Final Round, 7 p.m. (r), RPN 9
BASKETBALL: NBA - Spurs vs Suns, 9 a.m. (r - 10 p.m.), Solar Sports; NBA Jam, 6:30 p.m., Lakers vs Blazers, 7 p.m., IBC 13
NBA Anthology - 1987 Los Angeles Lakers: Drive For Five, 7:30 p.m., ESPN
BASEBALL: LA Dodgers vs San Francisco Giants, 8 a.m., ESPN
2002 NCAA College World Series, 1 p.m. (r), ESPN
TENNIS: Masters Monte-Carlo, 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., Star Sports



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Co powers Viva past Blu Star

By Dennis U. Eroa

CEBUANO hotshot Joel Co continued his return to form as he powered Viva Mineral Water to a stunning 72-66 victory over Blu Star Detergent yesterday in the Sunkist PBL Unity Cup at the San Juan Gym.

The 6-foot Co, who formerly donned the jerseys of the Manila Metrostars and Socsargen Marlins, sank two crucial jumpers as Viva repulsed Blu's determined rally in the fourth period and scored its third straight win after starting with two straight losses.

After failing to make the PBA despite being drafted by Purefoods in 2000, Co, a star of the University of San Jose-Recoletos, toiled in the MBA. He was recruited by coach Koy Banal at the start of the conference to add experience to the youthful Viva lineup.

Eager to prove his worth, Co blended well to his teammates, emerging as Viva's leader.

"I'm thankful to the Lord for giving me the chance to return to the PBL," said the 27-year-old Co, who scored all his four points in the fourth period.

Blu dropped to 3-2 and must blame itself for its failure to sustain a strong start, falling victim to Viva's trapping defense in the second period, 41-28.

Shooting poorly from the field, the Detergent Kings found themselves trailing, 40-28 at the half. Tristan Codamon bannered a Blu uprising in the next two quarters but Viva held its ground.

Gerard Jones wowed the crowd with two thunderous dunks and Warren Ybañez sprinted to an easy layup as Banal's charges raced to a 63-53 lead, 5:20 remaining.

But the Detergent Kings were far from beaten. They dropped a 7-0 bomb to threaten at 63-60, 2:18.

The collapse, however, did not happen as Viva patienly rotated the ball, leading to a triple by Dennis Miranda and Co's four straight points, 70-60, 25 seconds remaining.

In the second game, LBC-Batangas downed Welcoat, 57-54, for its second win in six games. The Paintmasters dropped to 1-4.

Trailing by two, 56-54, Welcoat had the chance to send the game into overtime when Alex Compton committed a turnover, 7.5 seconds remaining.

But veteran Jercules Tangcay committed a bad inbound to Willy Wilson which was intercepted by Al Magpayo, dooming the Paintmasters' bid.

Ralph Emerson Rivera split his freethrows and the burly Magpayo preserved LBC's win when he blocked Marlon Kalaw's desperation three-point attempt.

Scores:

VIVA 72—Margate 13, Jones 11, Yabut 8, Misolas 8, Ybañez 7, Napa 7, Isip 5, Sinco 4, Co 4, Miranda 3, De Guzman 2, Razon 0.

BLU 66—Codamon 15, Gatumbalo 12, Mendez 9, De la Cuesta 7, Garcia 6, Gamboa 6, Lopez 4, Taguines 3, Prior 2, Pascual 2, Buenaventura 0.

Quarters: 15-18, 41-28, 55-49, 72-66

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Padilla Cup takes Lenten break

By Roy Luarca

LIKE many sports events, the 3rd Sen. Ambrosio Padilla Cup is going to take a Lenten break and will resume next week.

Aside from unbeaten Letran, other Senior teams ready to spend their week-long vacation contented are University of Santo Tomas, Mapua and Philippine College of Criminology.

Multi-titled San Beda College and Letran are setting the pace in the Junior division while Lyceum and Adamson are leading the women's field.

The UST Tigers banked on the hot hands of Jemal Vizcarra and Derrick Hubalde to down Metro Manila College, 94-84, in their initial appearance in Group A last week at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Vizcarra, a potential national player, topscored with 23 points followed by UST with 18.

Letran tows the 9-man Group A with a 4-0 card, followed by Mapua at 2-0.

It was PCCR of Coach Johnny Tam, however, who caused ripples when the Crimebusters rallied from an 8-point halftime deficit to stun the UPHR Altas, 73-68, in Group B, which is also composed of nine squads.

The Letran Squires appeared ready to challenge the powerhouse San Beda Red Cubs anew when they debuted with an 85-72 whipping of the Ateneo Blue Eaglets.

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MAGGERT watches his birdie putt drop into the cup on the 16th hole. AP

Serena dispatches Lindsay

CHARLESTON, S. C.—World number one Serena Williams continued her undefeated run this season to reach the final of the Family Circle Cup with a 6-1 7-5 win over Lindsay Davenport on Saturday. Williams, who has won all of her 21 matches this year, will meet Justine Henin-Hardenne in Sunday's final. Henin-Hardenne advanced with an easy 6-2 6-1 win over 17-year-old American Ashley Harkleroad.

AP

Maggert up; Tiger 4 off

Woods resurrects hopes of completing Masters '3-peat'

AUGUSTA—Tiger Woods magically resurrected his hopes for an unprecedented third consecutive US Masters on Saturday, firing a six-under-par 66 to close to within four shots of Jeff Maggert's third-round lead.

The world number one, who began the day narrowly avoiding his first missed cut in a major as a professional, reeled off six birdies in glorious spring sunshine at Augusta National, finishing at one-under-par 215.

It left him perfectly poised for a final-day tilt at the title and another slice of golfing history, after spending his first two rounds simply trying to make the halfway cut, which he only managed with a shot to spare at five over par.

"In this tournament, we all know that anything can happen on that back nine," Woods told reporters.

"You just need to get yourself in position. I'm four back now and that's not inconceivable, that's for sure," added Woods, who led or was tied for the lead going into the last round of all eight majors he has won.

No player in the 69-year history of the Masters has won three green jackets in a row and Woods, champion at Augusta in 1997, 2001 and again last year, still faces a massive challenge to overhaul Maggert and long-time leader Mike Weir.

Although he has set himself up for a so-called "three-peat"of Masters titles, the 27-year-old American said this would not affect his strategy for the final round.

"It doesn't really enter my mind," said Woods. "I'm trying to win a tournament and, if I win, obviously I take care of winning three in a row."

Canada's Weir, whose second-round 68

MAGGERT/ A22

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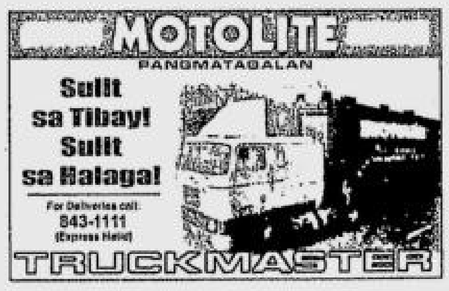
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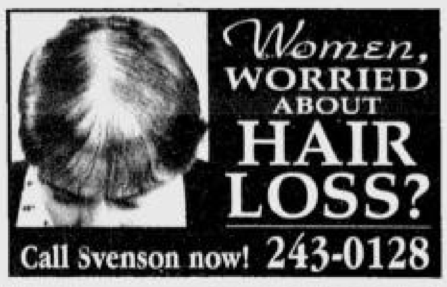
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Underdog beats Sharon

By Marinel R. Cruz

STARLET Aleck Bovick on Saturday won the best actress award for the bold movie "Tampisaw" at the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (Famas) awards ceremony at the Teatro Arturo Enrile of Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

Bovick, 18, beat veteran actress Sharon Cuneta ("Magkapatid"), Alessandra de Rossi ("Mga Munting Tinig"), Ara Mina ("Mano Po") and Claudine Barretto ("Kailangan Kita") for the best actress honors.

Bovick, Maria Theresa Tambis in real life, was the subject of a law suit filed by her father Aurelio P. Tambis who asked the Quezon City Regional Trial Court to throw his daughter in jail for appearing in exploitative bold movies that showed her in several stages of nudity when she was only 17. Bovick was only 17 when the case was filed.

The Famas, the oldest award-giving body in

UNDERDOG/ A26

UNDERDOG. Bold starlet Aleck Bovick smiles radiantly after winning the best actress trophy in last Saturday's Famas awards night. PDI PHOTO / AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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MMDA WARNING ON BUYERS

Don't patronize sidewalk vendors

By Christian V. Esguerra

PEOPLE buying from illegal sidewalk vendors may also be arrested for engaging in what the Metro Manila Development Authority described as "illegal transaction."

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said yesterday they would not make a distinction between buyers and illegal vendors in their campaign to clear the streets of all obstructions.

People patronizing sidewalk stalls are as guilty as unruly vendors in turning the streets into a chaotic marketplace, Fernando said.

"The Supreme Court decision was clear: the streets are beyond the commerce of man," he said. "Buying from illegal vendors is tantamount to engaging in illegal transaction."

Fernando's new approach on sidewalk vending problem came after he had convinced hawkers from the perpetually clogged Redemptorist Road in Baclaran. They were moved to two shopping malls nearby.

The road is now accessible to vehicles and people visiting the Shrine of the Mother of Perpetual Help.

A number of vendors, however, have resorted to "guerilla" tactics to elude the MMDA demolition team. They now use portable stalls that could easily be moved during clearing drives.

"We have to do this," one vendor said, "Otherwise, we would lose our only source of income."

Said another: "We can't afford to miss the huge crowd flocking to Baclaran this Holy Week."

NBI: Baladjay got 36,000 checks

By Philip Tubeza

PYRAMID scam suspect Rose Baladjay was able to get 36,000 pieces of checks from several local banks, which she issued to investors of her Multitel investment company, according to the National Bureau of Investigation.

NBI-Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz yesterday said that most of the checks Baladjay had issued to her investors had bounced.

"That number is beyond normal. (Multitel) is not a bank or a large company," Diaz said.

He said the NBI and the Securities and Exchange Commission have urged the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to instruct banks to be stricter when releasing checks to their clients.

Diaz said this is one of the measures the government is taking to prevent a repeat of pyramid schemes, which have victimized some two million Filipinos and foreigners.

Many of the victims are from the low income class, Diaz said.

The NBI had said that the pyramid schemes were able to milk investors of around P120 billion.

9 Bankwise execs face estafa raps

By Leila B. Salaverria

BANKWISE president Dante Ang and eight of the bank's officials have been accused of estafa by a Makati prosecutor for allegedly defrauding a retired Spanish lawyer and two non-government organizations of P40.5 million.

Charged in an information sheet filed by Assistant City Prosecutor Carlito Calpatura were Ang, Lazaro Madara, Vicente Campa Jr., Javier Quintos, Aurora Cruz, Jose Mari Martinez, Renato Francisco, Enrique Esteban and Antonio Ortigas.

Calpatura charged that the officials had conspired to convince Ramon Collado to deposit his money and that of PRAMA's and the Civil Society Foundation's in Bankwise in exchange for helping Collado sort out his problems with the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA).

Underdog beats Sharon

From page A25

the country, passed "Dekada 70" star Vilma Santos in the best actress nomination. But unlike earlier award ceremonies, the Famas awards night was not marred by protests from losers.

Director Gil Portes' heart wrenching take on a young teacher's (Alessandra de Rossi) struggles in a far-flung barrio in the movie "Mga Munting Tinig" won the Famas best picture award.

A teary-eyed Portes received the trophy, saying "we cannot compete with Hollywood movies in terms of special effects, we do not have the money for it. I suggest that we all go back to creating character-driven films like 'Mga Munting Tinig,' films that are capable of making our country proud."

Portes also went home with another best director trophy for the same movie, and Brian Homecillo received his second best child supporting actor award for his role in "Mga Munting Tinig." Homecillo won the same award from the Film Academy of the Philippines last month.

The Famas gave Eddie Garcia his 15th acting trophy for his role in "Bahid." This elevates the veteran actor to the Famas Hall of Fame next year after receiving five best actor awards from the awards body.

Piolo Pascual won his fourth best supporting actor trophy for his compelling performance in "Dekada 70," and Kris Aquino her third acting award for her work in "Mano Po."

Chasing the drug monster

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE UNPARDONABLE, savage rape-murder of a seven-year old lass in Hulo, Mandaluyong City, where the son of the barangay chairman is openly identified as a drug user, has led to a quiet but intensified anti-drug drive in the city.

That crime had resulted into anger and revulsion among residents.

One result is this letter from a lawyer, who also offered what could help put a check to the mounting drug problem in the city. Please share his message:

***

Dear Sir:

I was leaving the City Prosecutor's Office in Mandaluyong City when four men were brought to the office of Assistant Prosecutor Flor Silao. Quickly finding out who they were, I said to the hapless child's neighbors who came to see them brought to justice, "*Pinabayaan niyo pang madala rito!*"

Those monsters should be skewered like we do our lechons, but only after their penises were cut and rammed down their throats.

I wrote our mayor sometime back on the subject of drug tests. I said that everybody should undergo a drug test. The appropriate certification would be issued them who passed the test. This certification should be required whenever one deals with any of the government offices. An ordinance should be passed requiring all business establishments and schools in the city to require the certification before one is employed or enrolled. Every business establishment, school and home should be able to put a placard in front of it, saying, for example, "This store is drug-free." An individual could wear on his chest a badge of honor, "I'm drug-free!" The tests would be costly, but they are a price that we must and should pay!

***

Let me quote Conrado de Quiros who commented in his column on Jan. 20, 1998 about those who chose to be anonymous. I quote:

"I can understand why someone should fear for his life in those corners of the land that God and the law forgot. But in the heart of Metro Manila? And from institutions and public officials? You believe the justices of the Supreme Court are corrupt, you should come out and say it. Of course, you could get haled to court for it, but that is a risk you have to take. Whoever said writing was supposed to be safe? Whoever said truth was supposed to be safe? The truth can only make you free, not at large."

I salute Kagawad Side Manansala for taking the risk of being identified.

Others, like the "civic worker", the "cop" and the "political guru", should take heed. As Mr. de Quiros has said, they should come out.

Rolando B. Teves
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*W*ellness is a great and powerful word.

Unfortunately, it is also one of the least understood. But if we adopt and start putting this word into our vocabulary and the concepts it entails into our lives then we would have been able to empower and benefit ourselves with a most potent and powerful philosophy to live and maximize our lives.

Indeed, there is a genuine need to address wellness in the Philippines, particularly to more than 80 Million Filipinos, where an overwhelming 90% have difficult access or sub-standard healthcare attention brought about by indifference and more importantly, the lack of financial means. This is the heart of wellness, and MAXIGOLD believes it is our country's only real and lasting means in addressing the healthcare agenda of Filipinos. This approach to healthcare, and to life, is really the only viable option. It is based on the truth that we as individuals make the single most powerful contribution to our health and well-being. While there are doctors, medications and alternative medical approaches available, the truth is that all of these fall short of the true healing power that all lies within us.

Wellness is the complete integration of our body, mind and spirit—the realization that culminates into everything we do, think, feel and believe that affects our state of well-being.

Wellness is a choice, an option—the decision we make to move toward optimal health and maximizing our lives.

Wellness is a process—an awareness that there is no end point but an infinite challenge to meet and make available for our sake and those of our loved ones, health and happiness needs at the present moment, tomorrow, next week, next year and onwards.

Traditional medicine finds a problem -a symptom- -and treats it. The goal is to neutralize symptoms, to return to a point of no discernible illness. This is the disease model of medicine. Preventive medicine, now being heralded by an increasing number in the medical community, is also based on the disease model. The goal is the same: no discernible illness or until you can afford to do so.

Wellness strives for a new standard. No matter what our state of health, wellness calls for continuing improvement and self-renewal in all areas of life. Wellness seeks more than the absence of illness; it searches for new levels of excellence. Beyond any disease-free neutral point, wellness prescribes its efforts to our total well-being—in body, mind and spirit.

TOTAL WELLNESS PROGRAM TWP

MAXIGOLD moves to make wellness a national advocacy thru its TOTAL WELLNESS PROGRAM (TWP) by reaching to as many of our fellow countrymen in both the local and international communities and thereby make available to them the benefits of a wellness program that will allow them to discover the power within themselves, to improve and search for excellence in their health, individually, then in the totality as Filipinos.

WHY WE NEED TWP

Environmental and social problems, polluted air and water, food lacking in nutrients. Combine these with the stress and cares of everyday life from society, family, job, and financial challenges, the need for a TOTAL WELLNESS PROGRAM has never been more relevant and necessary.

TO NOURISH OUR BODY THRU NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTATION

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TO "PREVENT" RATHER THAN CURE DISEASES

Statistically, you have less than 1% chance of dying naturally, 1% chance of being killed or murdered, 5% chance of dying in an accident, but you have more than 90% chance of dying from a preventable disease!

TO AVOID THE HIGH COST OF HOSPITALIZATION AND THE RISK OF DYING DUE TO HOSPITAL RELATED CAUSES.

Reports show that many people die in hospitals not because of the ailments they were originally admitted for. According to People's Medical Society, "four out of ten people admitted to hospitals are there as a result of medical care they received". One of the saddest and most suppressed statistics of our time is that the rate of hospital-acquired infections has doubled over the last ten years.

TO MANAGE STRESS

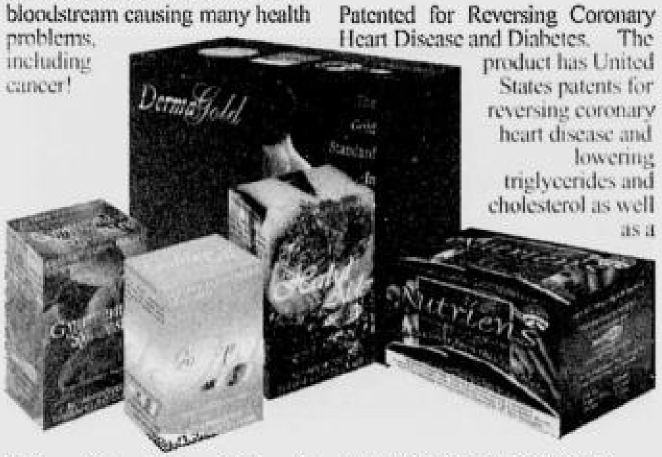
Stress and pressures of everyday life; social problems, family problems, crime, etc., which are primarily due to the vicious cycle of poverty or financial distress that when all added up, make us vulnerable to life-threatening diseases or ailments that make us less efficient in our work, even at times helpless to cope with difficult and trying situations around us.

MAXIGOLD offers three (3) product lines that supplement the equation for its TOTAL WELLNESS PROGRAM.

(1) NUTRACEUTICALS The banner product of MAXIGOLD under its nutraceutical line is its "GOLDEN OIL", which is a blend of Essential Fatty Acids "EFA's", more popularly known as VITAMIN "F".

"GOLDEN OIL" is a wellness breakthrough because it helps strengthen cell membranes when and where the same have degenerated due to ailments such as Arthritis, High Blood and Cholesterol, Asthma, Bronchitis, Back-Shoulder-Knee Pains, Lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, etc. The list is quite long. Golden Oil is recommended as a daily food supplement to strengthen cells, particularly the heart and brain cells, and to boost T-Cells which collectively comprise our body's immune system. It also helps relieve pain naturally and is effective in reducing inflammations. And because of its anti-oxidant properties, Golden Oil works best to delay the aging process.

"HERBAL AIDE", the 2nd of 3 nutraceutical products of MAXIGOLD is best used as a co-efficent of Golden Oil. HERBAL AIDE is a special blend of HERBS formulated to AID the body eliminate wastes, toxins and parasites that may be present in the colon as well as rebuild the bloodstream and assists in the assimilation of nutrients by the cells and tissues. A clogged intestine with fecal matter and plenty of sugar provides for an ideal environment for parasites to thrive. Parasites rob us of the vital nutrients our body needs. Their own waste matter circulates in our bloodstream causing many health problems, including cancer!



Last but not least is MAXIGOLD's "GYMNEMA SYLVESTRE" which is nature's way of helping prevent the accumulation of sugar in our blood. Diabetes is a disease affecting the way the body uses food, causing high sugar levels in the blood. Heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney disease, lower extremity amputation are the usual long-term complications of diabetes. And because of its ability to prevent the accumulation of sugars in the blood and the subsequent absorption into our digestive system, Gymnema Sylvestre is also widely used to reduce, maintain and manage weight and obesity problems coupled with regular exercise and a balanced diet, Gymnema Sylvestre can provide for a more active and enjoyable lifestyle.

(2) NUTRITIONALS - Under its Nutrionals line, MAXIGOLD offers:

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"NUTRIENS The Most Nutritious Whole Food on Earth" The presence of more than 100 antioxidants in NUTRIENS is significant because antioxidants perform better in teams against free radicals. There are tens of thousands of free radicals created in the body every second. Smoking, pollutants, radiation, excessive sun exposure, food chemicals and even emotional stress create free radicals. Antioxidants "eat up" these free radicals before they can damage the body that will lead to cell degeneration.

Patented for Reversing Coronary Heart Disease and Diabetes. The product has United States patents for reversing coronary heart disease and lowering triglycerides and cholesterol as well as a supportive therapy for diabetes.

(3) PERSONAL CARE - The first two product lines of MAXIGOLD deals with keeping us well and good inside. Its 3rd product line promotes and guarantees the same externally. "DERMAGOLD" is a selection of specialty soaps that make use of an all-natural base to promote a healthier, cleaner, hygienic skin.

MAXIGOLD FINANCIAL WELLNESS PLANS offer income opportunities via the purchase of its products. Whether as an Associate Distributor, Wellness Associate or a Wellness Advisor, you can avail of its FREE training workshops, TWO – Total Wellness Orientation, NET, New Entrepreneur's Training, and its flagship 24K (WAP) Wellness Advisory Program which can and will enable you to earn RETAIL PROFIT, WEEKLY REBATES, MONTHLY REBATES, PROFIT SHARING SCHEMES and INCENTIVES.

3RD YEAR GOING STRONGER

On its 3rd year Anniversary, April 15, Entrepreneur Gold International, Corporation's MAXIGOLD is now, more than ever, ready and positioned to empower more Filipinos thru education and continuous training under its 24K WAP (Wellness Advisory Program), meant to be an outreach campaign to make Filipinos aware that TOTAL WELLNESS truly lies within us and we simply have to make that choice.

Amidst the scandals and intrigues of pyramiding scams and money-laundering activities that have scarred the operations of legitimate and legally founded Leverage Marketing companies, MAXIGOLD has been delivering its promise for a healthier and better life for its growing membership. Aside from the countless testimonials on the efficacy of its products that fall short of being documented as "miracles", the more significant successes of its members whose lives have been enriched financially, have all the more inspired the members and ultimately, Entrepreneur Gold International Corp. to forge and make relevant the blessings it has thus far received.

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Nora marks 50th birthday with 'Gold' concert

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SO-CALLED film superstars come and go, but industry observers agree that **Nora Aunor** is still the country's original superstar. This, despite the great success of other major stars before Nora's time, like **Atang dela Rama, Rogelio dela Rosa, Carmen Rosales, Dolphy, Tita Duran, Gloria Romero, Susan Roces, Fernando Poe, Jr.**—etc!

What made Nora unique was her feat of practically singlehandedly setting a new, more Filipino standard for local stardom. In the '70s, when most movie stars were *tisays* or *tisoys*, dark-skinned Nora won even more fans by looking like many of the Pinays who watched her films.

Thus, Nora enjoyed greater audience empathy than her predecessors and contemporaries, despite her looking "local" rather than "imported"—or more properly, because of it.

She really didn't plan to be so successful or revolutionary, but that's what she became. After she had broken through, other Pinoy-looking talents had an easier time ascending to stardom.

True, years later, the *tisoy* standard for stardom reasserted itself, but Nora's contribution still can't be gainsaid, or forgotten.

As for the people who became movie fans after Nora's star had started to lose its luster, they may not understand why she continues to be held in such high esteem, despite the bigger film hits that younger stars like **Sharon Cuneta** and **Judy Ann Santos** have been chalking up.

Well, the reason is Nora's stellar longevity. After more than 30 years in the biz, her reputation for thespic excellence remains unmatched. Can young comers likes Judy Ann hope to match that daunting achievement?

These thoughts come to mind because Nora Aunor is marking her 50th birthday this year with a big concert, titled "Gold" at Araneta Coliseum on May 15. This is a must-see entertainment event for all of her loyal followers and she deserves the accolades that, this early, are already being sent her way.

There are worries that her singing voice is not what it used to be, but we fully expect Nora to rise up to the landmark concert's challenge.

In any case, the show has more than just a series of songs in store for Nora's fans. It will detail her progress through the years in the various aspects and phases of her life and career—as singer, actress, woman and Filipino.

Nora's co-stars on her weekday TV soap, "Bituin," are expected to guest on the show. But even if Nora were all alone on that huge Araneta Coliseum stage, "Gold" would still be a special treat for the Superstar's diehard followers.

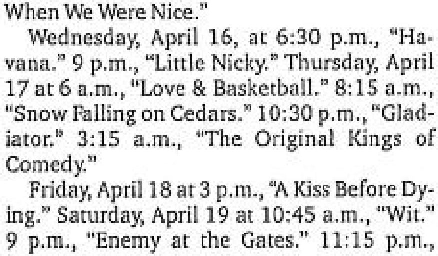
Movies on TV

On HBO: Monday, April 14 at 9 a.m., "Hanover Street." 2:15 p.m., "Pet Sematary." 10:30 p.m., "Kylie Minogue: Fever 2002 Live." Tuesday, April 15 at 4:30 p.m., "This Thing Called Love." 6:30 p.m., "The Cowboy Way." 10 p.m., "The Mind of the Married Man: When We Were Nice."

Wednesday, April 16, at 6:30 p.m., "Havana." 9 p.m., "Little Nicky." Thursday, April 17 at 6 a.m., "Love & Basketball." 8:15 a.m., "Snow Falling on Cedars." 10:30 p.m., "Gladiator." 3:15 a.m., "The Original Kings of Comedy."

Friday, April 18 at 3 p.m., "A Kiss Before Dying." Saturday, April 19 at 10:45 a.m., "Wit." 9 p.m., "Enemy at the Gates." 11:15 p.m., "The Mind of the Married Man: When We Were Nice." 11:50 p.m., "Guarding Tess."

On the Cinemax channel: Monday, April 14 at 6 a.m., "The Caine Mutiny." 9:45 a.m., "Being John Malkovich." Tuesday, April 15 at 10 a.m., "Cinema Secrets: Amazing Creature." 10:30, "Lorenzo's Oil.



'SANA AY IKAW NA NGA'
The long wait is over. After all the obstacles, Carlos Miguel (Dingdong Dantes) and Cecilia Fulgencio (Tanya Garcia) are finally going to tie the knot and even the ever scheming Olga (Maricar De Mesa) can do nothing to stop it on GMA 7's "Sana ay Ikaw na Nga" on April 16.

Paolo Bediones: I want to make more movies, have my own show

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

PAOLO Bediones insists he is the marrying type.

At 29, he is giving himself three or four more years before getting hitched.

"I want to be sure not just about my future but also about the future of the girl I'm going to marry," Paolo grants.

He admits he envies his "S-Files" co-host **Richard Gomez** whenever he sees him carrying his and **Lucy Torres'** two-year-old daughter **Juliana**.

"I don't want to be too old when I get married," Paolo says. "I still want to be able to play basketball with my kids."

Nothing has really been written about his succeeding romances after his breakup with **Tisha Silang**, but Paolo has been linked with a number of girls, from bold stars to singers to beauty queens, like his "Extra, Extra" co-host **Miriam Quiambao**.

Paolo, however, claims he has had someone special for a long time now: singer **Maxine (Annabelle Santos** in real life), 22, who briefly had a career here but decided to return to Canada, where she was born and raised, to finish her studies.

"Maxine and I are in touch every day," Paolo says. "We are the best of friends. Some people may find our setup weird. Now that she's in first year college, she is allowed to date. And while I am enjoying a new phase in my career, I can also go out and have fun.

"But after three or four years when she finishes her studies and we still feel the same way for each other, we'll get married," he adds.

The host of three TV programs—"Xtra, Xtra," "Digital LG Quiz Show" and "S-Files"—recently tried his hand at acting. He is making his movie debut in Viva Films' "Walang Kapalit," which marks the screen reunion of **Sharon Cuneta** and **Richard Gomez.**

When director **Joel Lamangan** first offered the role to him, Paolo didn't think twice about accepting it.

"It was a no-brainer for me," Paolo says. " When I was told it was a Sharon-Richard movie, I didn't care what my role was. I didn't pass up the opportunity to work with them."

Paolo plays Sharon's boyfriend. "It's not a role na *pang-gulat* or *pang*-award," Paolo maintains. "But it's substantial enough for me to make a mark."

In one scene, he wears micro-cycling shorts, which was a compromise with director Lamangan.

"*Direk* Joel wanted me to wear swimming trunks because the scene was in the pool where I was teaching Sharon's son to swim," Paolo shares. "But I was not comfortable being seen in trunks on the big screen, so I settled for the cycling shorts."

Also being introduced in the same movie is Miriam Quiambao, who plays Richard's girlfriend.

"*Direk* Joel really wanted me and Miriam for the roles," Paolo says.

The most challenging act in the film for Paolo is his fight scene with Richard.

"It was physically tiring," he says. "It's hard to do cinematic fighting when you haven't even thrown a punch in your life. I've always been a pacifist even when I was a kid. *Ako ang nasuntok* once while I was trying to prevent a fight. I never retaliated.

"Fortunately, Goma is experienced in doing fight scenes. He guided me throughout the take."

Paolo apparently impressed his co-workers with his professionalism, so that *Direk* Joel reportedly wanted him right away for another movie.

"I want to make more movies or have my own, late-night talk show like **David Letterman** or **Jay Leno**," Paolo says. "There are still a lot of things I want to do."

NO TRUNKS. Paolo Bediones plays the boyfriend of Sharon Cuneta but refuses to wear swimming trunks in "Walang Kapalit."

'Kapiling' newcomer

THE NEWEST addition to the cast of GMA 7's "Habang Kapiling Ka" is **Yul Servo**, best actor awardee in the Brussels International Film Festival 2002 for **Lav Diaz's** "Batang West Side."

Also for his performance in the same movie, Yul won the best actor trophies from the Star Awards, the Gawad Urian and Cine Manila.

The 26-year-old Yul started out in stage plays like the hilarious "Caught in the Act." Director **Maryo J. de los Reyes**, who manages Yul's career, was responsible for his

PAOLO/ A30

SOAP STAR. Yul Servo brings his award-winning talent to GMA 7's "Habang Kapiling Ka."

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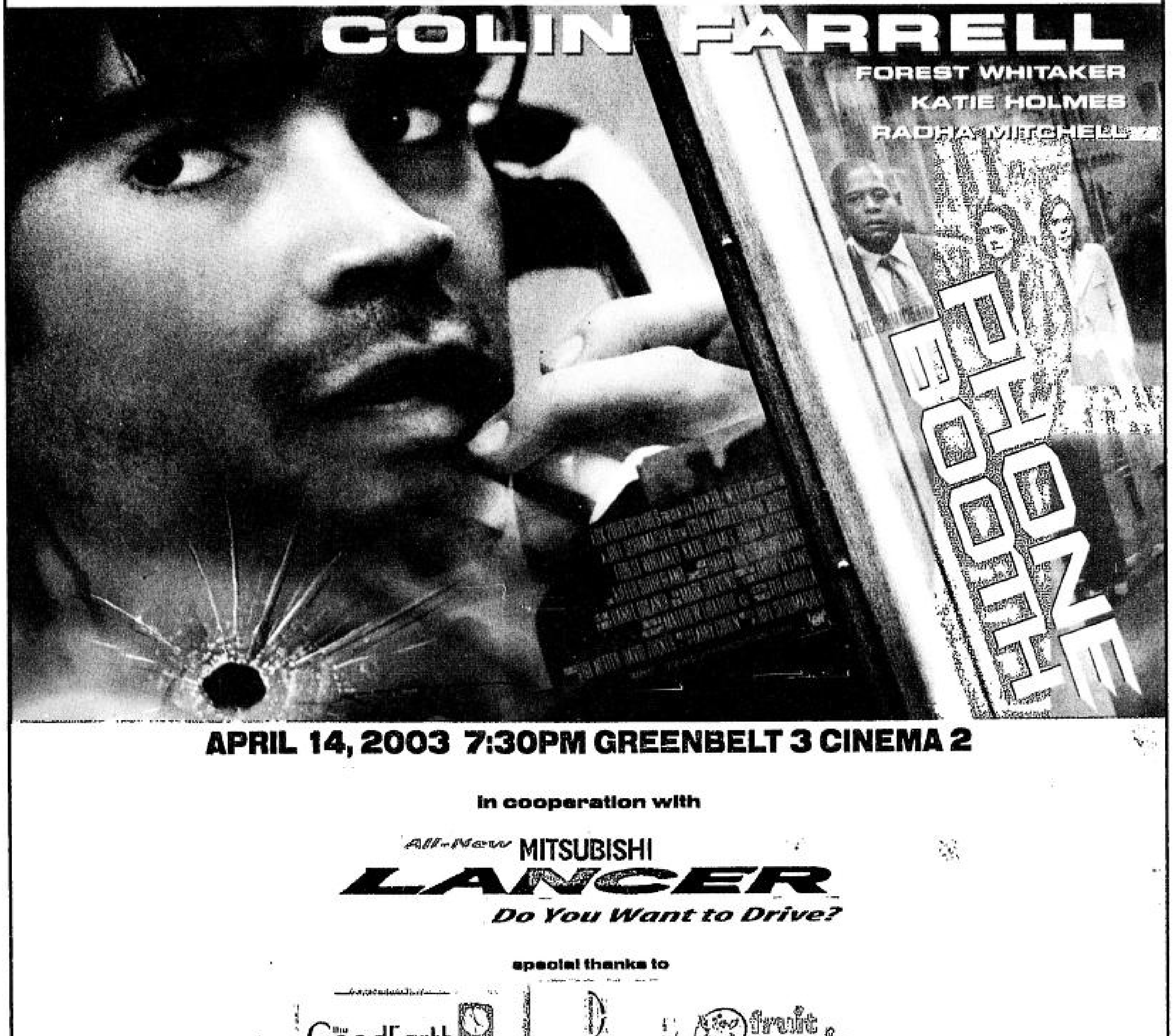

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2 SEX DRIVE	2 ANGER MANAGEMENT (ADVANCE SCREENINGS)	2 KANGAROO JACK 11:45, 1.45, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45, 9:45	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 THE WILD THORNBERRYS 1.15, 3.15	2 KANGAROO JACK
3 KANGAROO JACK	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 JUST MARRIED 12.30 2.30 4.30 6.30 8.30 10.30	ACOUSTIC NIGHT OUT SERIES May 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & 31	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 KANGAROO JACK 1.10, 3.10, 5.10, 7:10, 9:10, 11:10	3 THE WILD THORNBERRYS
4 NATIONAL SECURITY	4 SOLARIS		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 THE RECRUIT 1:10, 3:45, 6.20, 8.55, 11.30	4 SOLARIS
	5 THE JUNGLE BOOK 2 (ADVANCE SCREENINGS)		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 ANGER MANAGEMENT (ADVANCE SCREENINGS) 12.40, 2.50, 5.00, 7.10, 9.20, 11.30	ANGER MANAGEMENT (ADVANCE SCREENINGS)
	6 NATIONAL SECURITY			
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10	JUNGLE BOOK 2

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4	JUST MARRIED
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1	THE CORE
2	SEX & ZEN 2
3	JUST MARRIED
4	THE RECRUIT
5	ABANDON
6	SEX DRIVE

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT

8294975

1	JUNGLE BOOK 2
2	KANGAROO JACK
3	NATIONAL SECURITY
4	THE CORE

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN

2514302

1	THE CORE
2	SEX DRIVE
3	NATIONAL SECURITY
4	KANGAROO JACK

SM CITY DAVAO

2976998

1	DREAMCATCHER
2	EXTREMISTS
3	TEARS OF THE SUN
4	THE CORE
5	THE WILD THORNBERRYS
6	THE RECRUIT

SM BICUTAN

770-3055

1	NATIONAL SECURITY
2	ANGER MANAGEMENT
3	KANGAROO JACK
4	THE CORE

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

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1	TEARS OF THE SUN
2	JUST MARRIED
3	THE CORE
4	GANGS OF NEW YORK

THE PODIUM CINEMA

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1	SOLARIS 11:40 FS/12:10 MF/2:20/4:30/6:40/8:50/ 10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/12:40 END
2	THE WILD THORNBERRYS MOVIE 11:00 FS/11:30 MF/1:25/3:20/5:15/7:10/9:05 10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/12:25 END

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4	THE RECRUIT
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6	SOLARIS
7	DREAM CATCHER
8	SEX DRIVE
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10	WILD THORNBERRY

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6	WILD THORNBERRY
7	NATIONAL SECURITY

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2	SOLARIES
3	THE CORE
4	NATIONAL SECURITY
5	THE RECRUIT
6	WILLARD
7	KANGAROO JACK
8	SEX DRIVE

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2	WILLARD
3	THE RECRUIT
4	KANGAROO JACK
5	DREAM CATCHER
6	WILD THORNBERRY
7	JUST MARRIED
8	SEX DRIVE

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6	THE CORE

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3	WILD THORBERRY
4	KANGAROO JACK
5	SEX DRIVE
6	WILLARD

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2	THE CORE
3	PALABAN
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5	JAIL BIRD

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2	DREAM CATCHER
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Iloilo

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2	DREAM CATCHER
3	THE RECRUIT
4	EXTRIMIST
5	GANGS OF NEW YORK
6	SEX DRIVE

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Lenten drama episodes aired on 'Eat Bulaga!'

AS IN previous years, "Eat Bulaga!" turns off the raucous laughter and observes long moments of solemnity as it marks the Holy Week with special dramatic and inspirational episodes.

Featured today, Holy Monday, is "The Manager," written by Bibeth Orteza, a light drama on the importance of people who make decisions and plan strategies for the betterment of lives and careers.

The episode stars "Eat Bulaga!" host Vic Sotto, together with Ruby Rodriguez, Francis Magalona, Maxene Magalona, Jose Wally, Rochelle and the Sexbomb Dancers.

The Holy Tuesday episode, "Ang Kayaman," is about sibling rivalry. Also written by Orteza, it is directed by Ruel Icamen.

"Ang Kayaman" stars Joey de Leon, with Anjo Yllana, Jimmy Santos, Toni Rose Gayda, Gladys Guevarra, Toni Gonzaga and Jooneee Gamboa.

Holy Wednesday will feature award-winning actress Jacklyn Jose and comedian Allan K. in a story of love, forgiveness and redemption entitled "Habilin," written by Irma Dimaranan and directed by Gina Aljar.

"Habilin" has the special participation of Janno Gibbs, Paolo Ballesteros, Leila Kuzma, Jopay and Diana Zubiri.

'Phone Booth' premiere

YES! FM 101.1, Ang Sagot ng Bayan, premieres Twentieth Century Fox's suspense thriller, "Phone Booth," 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 15, at SM Megamall Cinema 1.

In a city of 12 billion people and 22 million phones, a slick New York publicist (Colin Farrell) picks up a ringing phone inside a booth. He is then told that if he hangs up, he'll be killed. With his life hanging in the balance, he is left with no choice but to keep on talking. No ifs, no buts. Today, someone has his number.

"Phone Booth" became a controversial movie in the US after theaters held off from showing it in deference to the victims of the real-life sniper that threatened the Virginia area.

Listeners may win movie premiere tickets by tuning in to Yes! FM and wait for the DJ's signal to call.

YES! FM is a member of the Manila Broadcasting Company (MBC), which operates the largest radio network in the country reaching virtually every Filipino city, province, town and municipality, with more than 600 FM and AM stations strategically scattered all over the country.

Its flagship station, dzRH, is the longest-running radio station in the Philippines, covering 97 percent of the archipelago.

This movie premiere is also presented by Smart Zed, Save Bathroom Tissue and Nissin's Yakisoba.

Puppet 'Pasyon' in QC, Intramuros, Manila

A SHORTENED version of playwright Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio's "Papet Pasyon" will be staged tomorrow and on Wednesday, dedicated to the late Prof. Elmo Makil, who had sung the songs of Christ and Judas in the puppet show.

Makil, who passed away on Jan. 1, 2003, was the chair of the Voice Department in the University of the Philippines College of Music.

Also from the UP College of Music was the late Prof. Rodolfo de Leon, who composed the music for the "Papet Pasyon" songs written by UP English professor emeritus Lapeña-Bonifacio.

Included in the presentation is the well-loved scene of the temptation of Christ which features puppets of a bat, a ram and the little devil boy and the towering flying puppets of the devil and the angel.

Actors give speaking voices to the puppets, which were created originally by Bernadette Solina and Maurice Carvajal. This year, the puppet costumes were designed and executed by Lapea-Bonifacio.

Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete directs UP Teatrong Mulat puppeteers Raymund Ramolete, Mon Agunaldo, Yeye Morente, Astrid Tobias, Rio Lirag, Zarah Reyes, Len de la Cruz, ,Glaiza Cruz, Nina Tavanlar, Ned Dizon, Aina Ysabel Ramolete, Japs Simpas, Mean Villa, and narrator Lola Amel.

Performances will be on Holy Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Project 4, Quezon City, upon the invitation of the new parish priest, Fr. Robert Reyes; Holy Wednesday, 5:30 p.m., in Intramuros upon the invitation of Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

For more information, call 921-9773.

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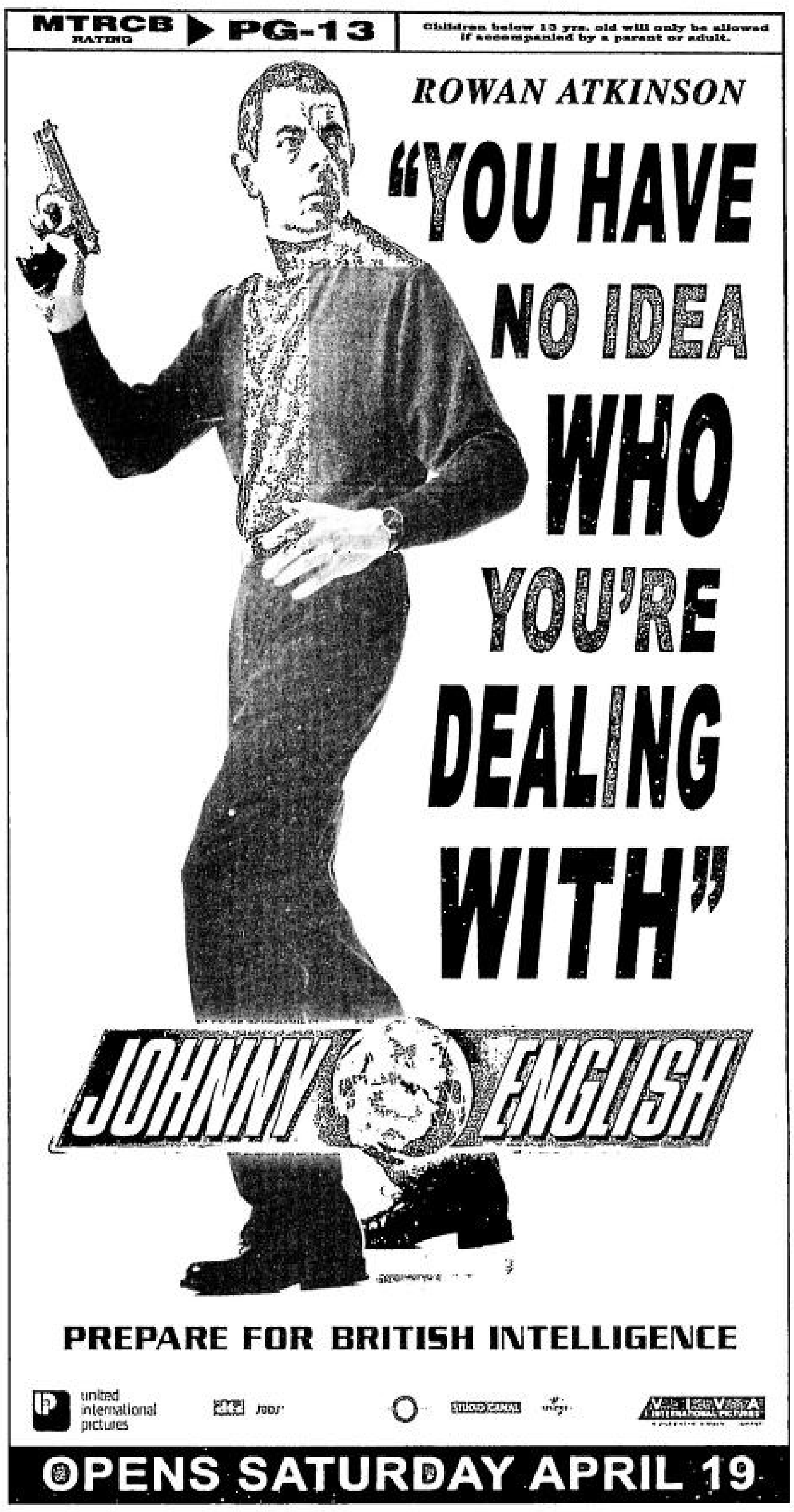
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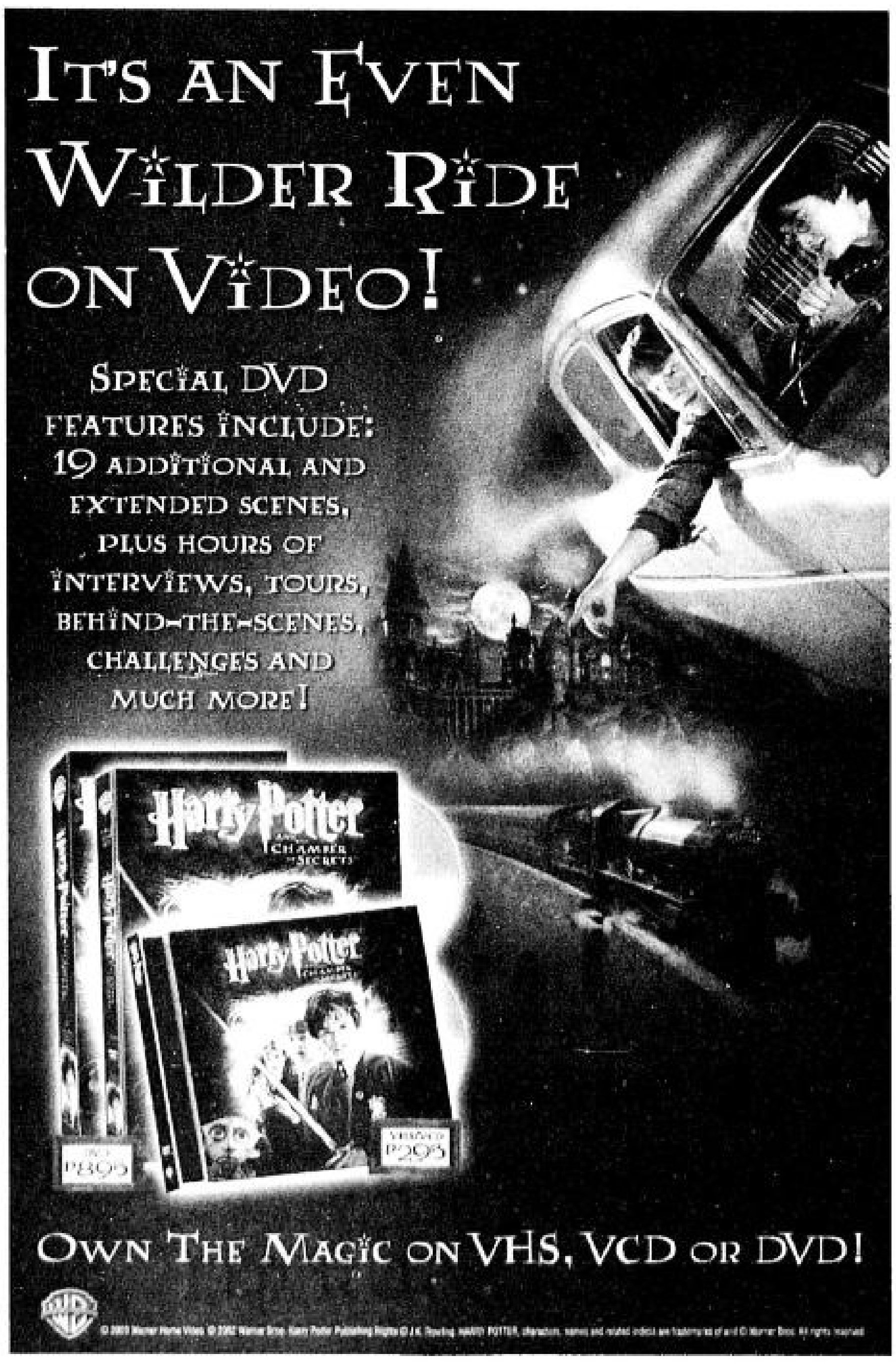
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SOLAR ENTERTAINMENT

Paolo Bediones: I want to ...

From page A27

movie break in "Bicol Express." But it was "Batang West Side" which launched Yul to stardom. In the said film, the young Bulakeño who once dreamed of becoming an action star like his idol Fernando Poe Jr., pitted acting talents with screen thespians such as **Elizabeth Oropesa** and **Joel Torre**, as well as with sexy actress **Priscilla Almeda.**

In "Habang Kapiling Ka," Yul's character meets and falls in love with the character of **Angelika de la Cruz.**

"Habang Kapiling Ka" airs weekdays after "Frontpage."

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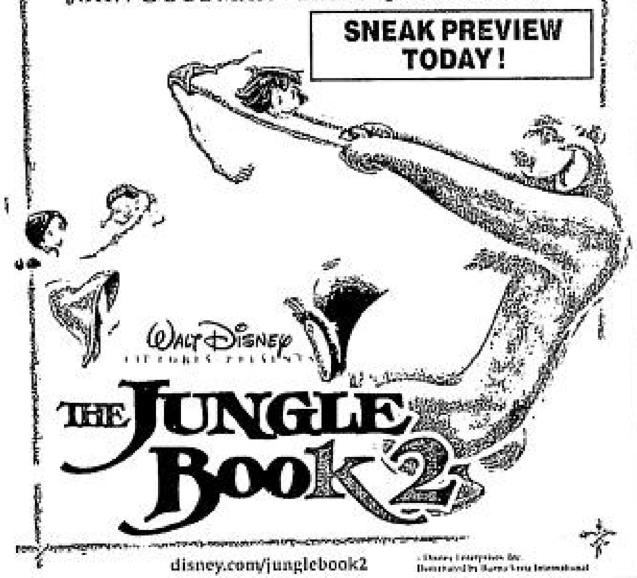

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Ali 3	NATIONAL SECURITY
Ali 4	THE CORE
Ali 5	KANGAROO JACK
Ali 6	SOLARIS
Ali 7	THE RECRUIT
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	SEX DRIVE
Farmers 2	WILLARD
ARANETA COLISEUM	
APR 17 & 18	SHALOM
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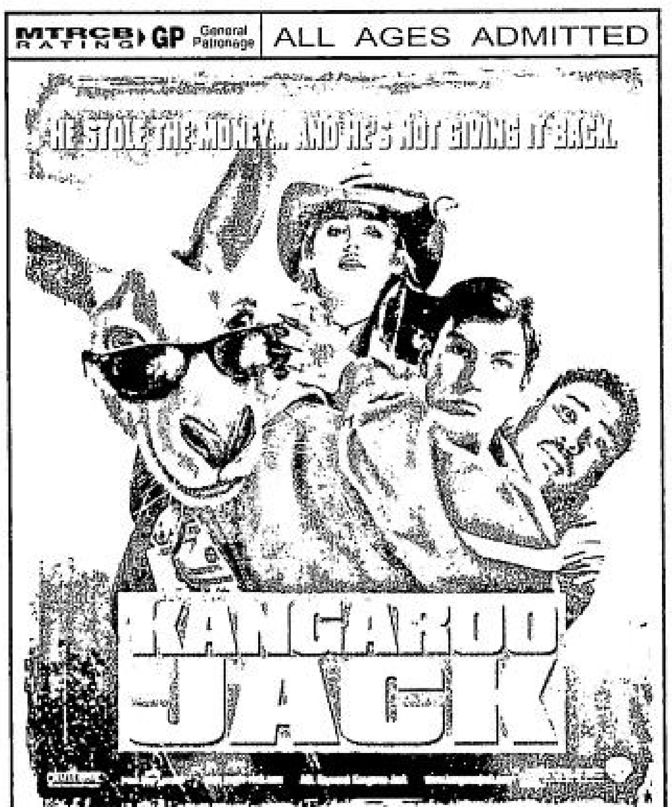

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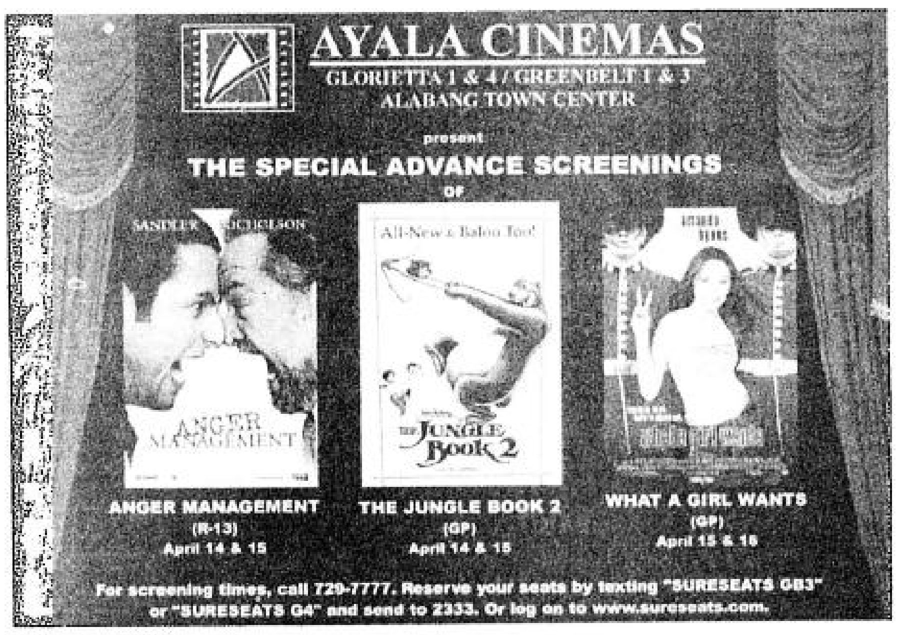

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ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
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CORONET B	VIRGIN PEOPLE III
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CINEMA-5 (DTS)	WISH MASTER
CINEMA-6	SEX DRIVE
CINEMA-7	PARU PARONG LIGAW
CINEMA-8	ASTERIX & OBELIX
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SOLARIS
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	KANGAROO JACK
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	NATIONAL SECURITY
CINEMA-12	WILD THORNBERRY'S
CINEMA-14	THE CORE
CINEMA-15	WILLARD
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
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CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	[illegible]
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(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
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SNEAK PREVIEWS TODAY (APR.15) & TOMORROW (APR.16)

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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

'SOLARIS'

Love, death, faith and science fiction

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

ACADEMY Award-winning director Steven Soderbergh ("Traffic") has dipped his hands in almost every genre. As further proof of his edgy flexibility, he makes a foray into science fiction, and his first effort defies the obligatory focus on technological wonders or epic outer space showdowns.

Instead, his adaptation of the novel "Solaris" by Stanislaw Lem centers on a love story that presents ponderous questions about life, the afterlife, destiny, and otherworldly miracles. Soderbergh also worked as writer, editor and cinematographer on the film, which is a reworking of an acclaimed 1972 Russian movie of the same title, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky.

The premise is intriguing. In an undisclosed time in the future, psychologist Chris Kelvin (George Clooney) is summoned by an old associate, Gibarian (Ulrich Tukur), to investigate the simultaneous mental breakdowns of the members of a space crew he leads. Kevin boards their station, which is orbiting a planet called Solaris, and he discovers a series of inexplicable goings-on in the almost-too-quiet facility.

Resurrected

He finds Gibarian in a body bag, apparently dead for quite some time. He also finds two surviving crew members -- paranoid scientist Helen Gordon (Viola Davis) who petulantly confirms that their leader committed suicide, and her colleague, Snow (Jeremy Davies), an incoherent mess who answers Kelvin's questions with half-unhinged riddles.

SPACED OUT. George Clooney collaborates again with director Soderbergh and plays his part without the "E.R." swagger.

Kelvin soon discovers for himself the real reason for their deteriorating psychological conditions. In his temporary quarters, he dreams of his deceased wife, Rheya (Natascha McElhone), and their distant, happier memories together. He wakes up, and to his utter shock, he finds Rheya beside him: alive, tangible, and a little unaware that she shouldn't be.

Convinced that his mind is playing tricks on him, Kelvin lures her into an escape pod, and he effectively disposes of her "resurrected" wife in the vast blackness of space. But his problems don't end there.

He dreams of her again, and wakes up with her, impossibly, again. Barely believing it at first, he soon sees that this opportunity offers him a chance to make amends for their doomed union on Earth.

Revere or discard

He, Gordon and Snow theorize that Solaris may be a massive intelligence that creates copies of human beings plucked from their minds. The pink-gassed orb may actually be the source of their troubles, contradicting every logical thing they ever learned back home with these strange miracles.

"Solaris" is an extra-brainy conundrum that audiences will either revere as a future classic, or discard entirely as a pretentious, self-indulgent effort. Still, it all boils down to an either-you-get-it-or-you-don't argument. There is no compromise, you'll either love it or hate it.

I had little inkling of what the movie is about before seeing it, and I was pleasantly surprised. It's a subdued existentialist piece that uses a love story to ask its multi-tiered questions.

And many interesting questions are given, but there's a point made suggesting that sometimes there are no answers, only choices. It's easy to miss that, because Soderbergh uses a lot of shots that linger too long on the attractive production design.

The muted atmosphere, coupled with the unusually slow pacing, may be too much for some viewers to handle, unfortunately. There aren't any big, customary, action knee-jerkers, because that's the whole point: It veers away from the usual, instant gratification science fiction.

Ultimate enigma

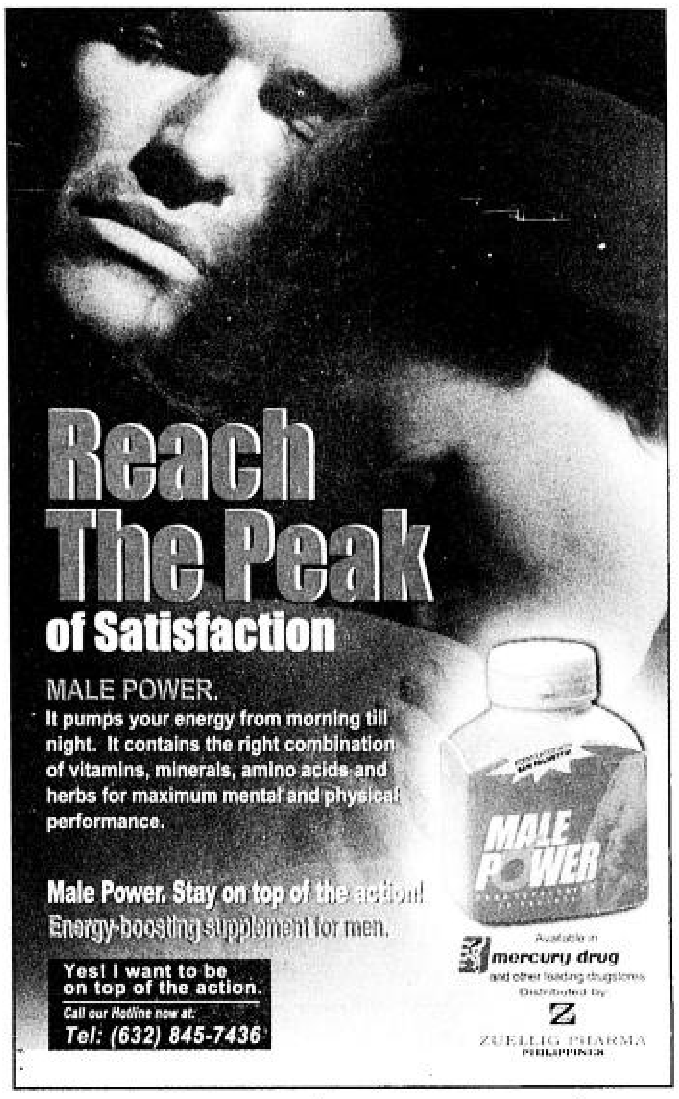
The casting is no less than perfect. Frequent Soderbergh collaborator Clooney has totally lost his distracting "ER" broken-neck swagger. McElhone is a class act, as always. Jeremy Davies is entirely unrecognizable from his naïve "Saving Private Ryan" role. And Viola Davis is a strong presence that counterbalances Clooney's as the detached, cold voice of reason.

Their characters are involving individuals, maneuvered into situations that make you believe their pain and confusion. The story could be set in a different environment altogether and still work with the same realism. Faced with the ultimate fantastical enigma (Solaris can be a euphemism for God or Mother Nature), the characters succumb to their limitations but adapt almost automatically in the face of hopelessness.

The sentimental mush involving the lovers helps stage a clear platform for questioning metaphysical laws: How exactly does the afterlife work? Is every religion wrong? Is there really predetermination? Are there second chances after this lifetime?

Whatever the answers, "Solaris" is far more than the cerebral love child of "Sphere," "Ghost" and "Sliding Doors." The tale could alienate viewers whose curiosity is only piqued by the hype over the roughly 40-second Clooney butt shot, but it will certainly placate viewers who are naturally inquisitive in other matters.

It's definitely not for everybody, but it's a milestone for the genre. It may be humorless and melancholic, but it heavily appeals to anyone who has ever dared question the unanswerable meaning of existence.



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Jake Roxas goes bold at last, though he doesn't think he's a hunk

By Remy M. Umerez
Contributor

THERE are some things in his past in show biz that former commercial model Jake Roxas would rather forget.

"I was young then and there was too much pressure from people around me," is all he will say. "Maybe I was wrong and they were right, I can't recall anymore. What I know is that my family was already affected by the intrigues. This is one thing I would not allow. I wish people would just hit at me and not drag my loved ones into it. So, when my contract with Viva expired, I decided to lie low."

Wasn't he aiming for stardom when he joined the movies?

"I was spotted in a shampoo commercial and Viva offered me a contract," he recalls. "At that time, I wanted to buy a motor bike but my money was not enough. The offer came at the right time. It was the solution to my problem. My goal then was to earn money and buy the things I liked to own."

By choice, Jake has limited his appearances to TV following the expiration of his Viva contract. For four years, he has been a regular on the top-rated sitcom "Beh Bote Nga" playing the role of a bully named KC.

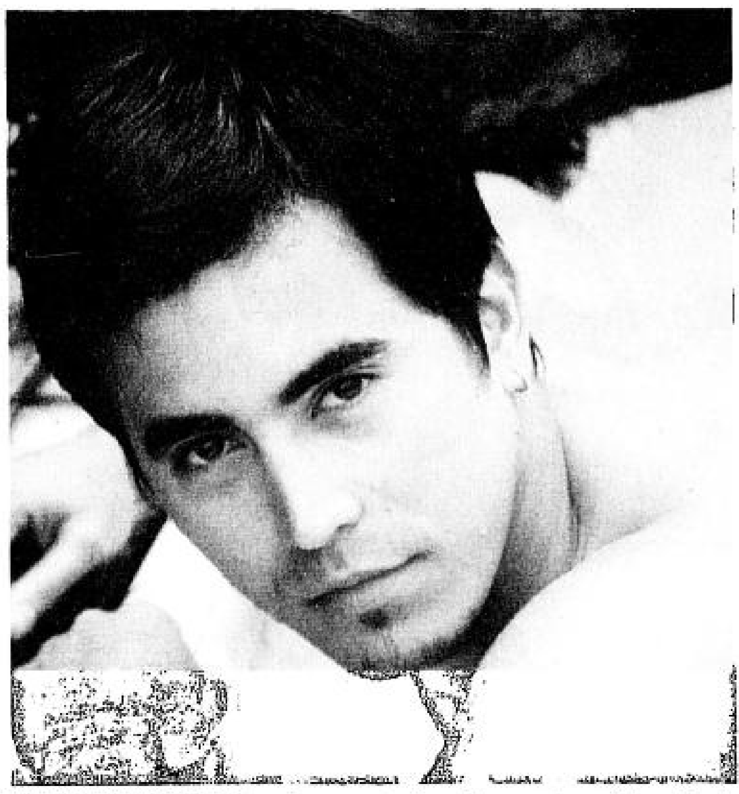
"I enjoy doing TV even if the taping hours leave me completely exhausted," says Jake. "But it is so much fun because of the laughter it provides. I prefer comedy to drama because drama is heavy stuff and can be stressful, too. In 'Beh Bote Nga,' we're like one big happy family, so there is no room for intrigues.

"In real life, I am family-oriented. I grew up with my grandma who taught me the values of family life."

Jake would not confirm nor deny the rumor that "Beh Bote Nga" is on its way out.

What about the character he portrays in the teleserye "Habang Kapiling Ka?" Is his character going to live?

"My contract with the drama episode is for two months only," he says. "In my last appearance, I was shot and there is the hanging question of whether I got killed or am still recovering. I haven't been informed yet of the character's fate."



FUTURE PERFECT. Jake is saving money to buy a house and wants to go back to college.

For the first time, the actor who would rather do comedy makes a bold move. He is going sexy in Regal's sex trilogy, "Xerex." Jake works for the first time with Aubrey Miles and director Mel Chionglo.

"Maybe if the leading lady had not been Aubrey, I would have had a hard time doing the bold parts," he confesses. "Aubrey and I have been friends from way, way back. She used to be in the cast of 'Beh Bote Nga' as the girlfriend of Anjo Yllana.

"It is nice working with Aubrey because she is cheerful by nature. She doesn't seem to get tired. She's always relaxed."

In the "Xerex" episode titled "Karma," Jake plays a kiss-and-tell campus heartthrob. Aubrey falls for him.

Jake says his real self is far from the character he is playing in "Xerex." He doesn't even consider himself a hunk.

"I don't even follow a serious regimen to keep fit," he admits. "The only form of exercise I know is basketball. But I try to lessen my food intake."

Jake says he would not mind doing more bold roles provided the script is a good one. "I liked doing the 'Karma' episode because it has comedy. I would rather do sex comedies."

For the future, Jake is trying to save enough money to buy a house. Whatever he earns, half is deposited in the bank. A little portion goes to a small business venture he has put up.

Jake also wants to finish college in the University of the Philippines, where he started taking up Visual Communication Arts.

A single parent, Jake turns 26 on July 13, the very same day he was discovered for the movies five years ago.

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Promo Mechanics

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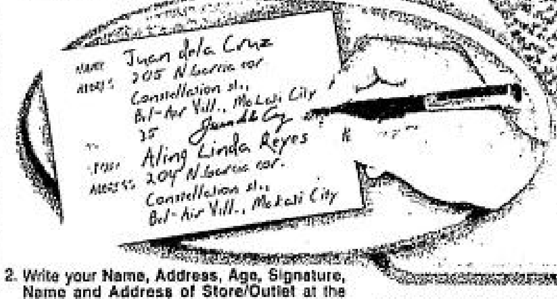
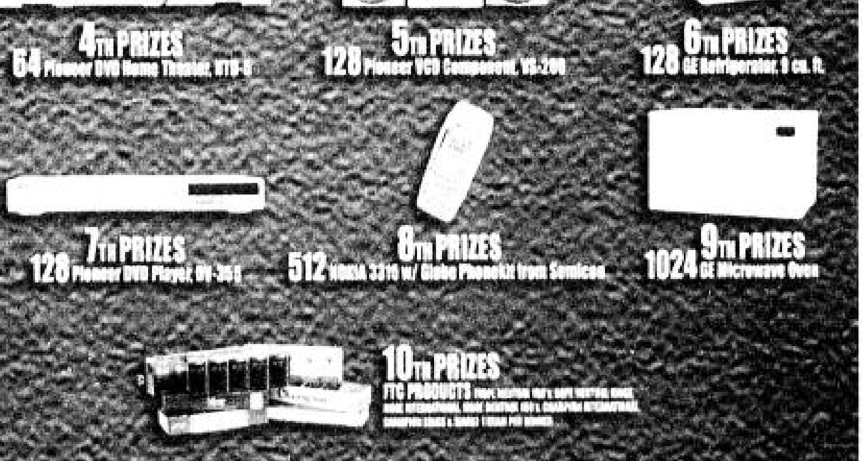


2. Write your Name, Address, Age, Signature, Name and Address of Store/Outlet at the back of empty packs of the following participating brands HOPE 100's, HOPE Kings, More International Kings, More Menthol 100's, Fortune International, Fortune International Menthol Kings, Fortune Extra Menthol 100's, Fortune Extra Menthol Kings, Fortune Extra Filter Kings, Champion International, Champion Kings, Champion Lights, Champion 100's, Mark 100's, Mark Kings, Winston, Winston Lights, and Camel Filter Kings.
3. All entries must have a portion of the pack seal.
4. Only Genuine and Original packs of participating brands made by Fortune Tobacco Corporation will be honored.
5. Drop your entries in Drop Boxes at designated drop centers.
6. You can only win 1 prize per Grand Draw. If your name is drawn more than once in a given draw, you win the bigger prize and forfeit the prize with a lesser price value.
7. The Stores/Outlets have a chance to win Cash Prizes in the Major Prize Category (1st to 3rd prizes only). In the event that a Store/Outlet owner wins a Major Prize during the draw, he or she will also win the corresponding cash prize for the Store/Outlet.
8. If a winning entry does not bear the Name and Address of the Store/Outlet, the entry will still be valid but no Store/Outlet Winner will be declared for the corresponding cash prize.
9. The following are the four (4) Grand Draw dates:
   1st Draw: June 28, 2003
   2nd Draw: October 4, 2003
   3rd Draw: January 17, 2004
   4th Draw: April 24, 2004
   (NOTE: Subject to change and will be announced in advance.)
10. Deadline for submission of entries per Grand Draw:
    a. Provincial Entries - ten (10) days before the Grand Draw
    b. Metro Manila Entries - 1 week before the Grand Draw
11. Only official representatives from Fortune Tobacco Corporation and DOH-BFAD will validate all winning raffle entries during the Pre-Draw and Grand Draw.
12. Major Prize Winners (for the 1st to the 3rd Prizes) will be drawn during a LIVE TELECAST of the Grand Draw in NBN Channel 4. Minor Prize winners (for the 4th to the 10th Prizes) will be pre-drawn prior to each Grand Draw Show.
13. The Raffle Prize and Store/Outlet winners of the 1st to the 9th Prizes will be published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer nine (9) days after the Grand Draw Show. As for the 10th Prizes Winners, a separate list of their names will be posted in the district/branch offices of Fortune Tobacco Corp. nationwide.
14. All prizes are TAX PAID. No fees are required to claim prizes.
15. Winners of the 1st to the 9th Prizes will be notified by telegram as to when and where they may claim their prizes. It must be personally claimed. The prizes of the 10th Prize Winners will be delivered at their respective home addresses.
16. When claiming the prizes, the winner must present the telegram and two (2) ID's bearing their photos and signatures. In case the claimant is unable to comply with these requirements, he or she must execute an affidavit to verify and establish his or her identity.
17. As for the Store/Outlet Winners, they must also present the telegram, two (2) ID's bearing their photos and signatures, and a copy of their business permit.
18. Prizes not claimed after sixty (60) days from the publication of the Winners Ad will be forfeited.
19. Non-winning entries per Grand Draw will not qualify for the next Grand Draw.
20. Employees of Fortune Tobacco Corporation, its Advertising Agencies and DOH-BFAD as well as their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity are not qualified to join this promotion.



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6TH PRIZES 128 GE Refrigerator, 9 cu. ft.

7TH PRIZES 128 Pioneer DVD Player, DV-35[illegible]

8TH PRIZES 512 NOKIA 3310 w/ Globe Phonekit from Semicon

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EO on RP's postwar Iraq strategy readied

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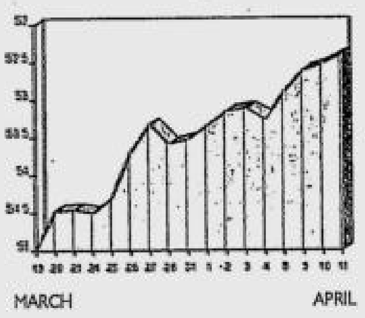

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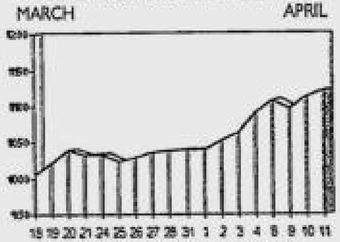
STOCK MARKET

Stocks seen higher on war windfall

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

WITH the conflict in Iraq seemingly over and perceptions that the Philippines may gain the most in Asia on account of its support for the United States' war efforts, analysts are upbeat local stocks may soon get a much-needed big lift.

Already, foreign investors have returned and have been net buyers in the stock market, largely driving the Philippine composite index up 31 points to 1,112 from the previous week's close.

"Maybe we're good for another 100 points up in the Phisix. It could go as high as 1,300 by June," Eagle Equities Inc. president Joseph Roxas said.

Roxas said blue-chip stocks generally remained good buys, as their prices were still low.

On specific stocks, the broker recommended ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., which reported a good first quarter, and Bankard Inc., which announced a shares buy-back program.

Bankard has said it will buy up to 50 million shares this month at P1.42 each.

Roxas said after the buy-back program, the price to earnings ratio of the credit card arm would only be four times earnings.

"I think the market will be up on thin volume because it's Holy Week," He said.

ABS-CBN has announced that its consolidated airtime revenue in

STOCKS/B4

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to issue this week an executive order mapping out the government's strategy in taking advantage of the economic opportunities in Iraq's postwar rehabilitation and the country's contribution to humanitarian efforts in that war-torn country.

A government source, who declined to be identified, said the President want a coordinated effort among the government agencies to make full use of the country's resources in clinching multi-million-dollar deals in engineering and construction work in Iraq.

The source said the President saw Iraq's postwar rehabilitation, estimated to cost $100 billion, not only as an opportunity to export pairs of hands but also to showcase the Filipinos' design and engineering capabilities at home and their efficiency and reliability in handling overseas jobs. The source said the President was aware that some of the work needed in Iraq, particularly planning and design, could also be done in the Philippines.

The source said the President's first priority was to secure financing and endorsements for qualified Filipino contractors to help them bag direct contracts for construction and engineering works and subcontracting arrangements with US giants such as Bechtel Corp., Haliburton and Fluor Daniel that were anticipated to corner most of the deals in postwar Iraq.

The President was determined to avoid the mistakes made when the country rushed headlong into a similar construction boom in the Middle East without sufficient financial capital. Despite their initial success, Filipino construction firms such as Construction Development Corporation of the Philippines and Landoil Resources fell into a financial rut after failing to obtain sufficient financial reserves to sustain their' working capital requirements.

The Philippine Export Import Credit Agency (Philexim) on Friday announced that it was willing to guarantee up to $400 million per contract but only to Philippine construction firms and labor contractors without bad record with the agency.

On the country's contribution to humanitarian work in Iraq, the source said the first batch of peace-keeping forces would be deployed after Easter Sunday.

CalPERS seen putting RP under 1-yr. 'cure period'

By Clarissa S. Batino

DIRECTORS of the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) are expected to decide in favor of retaining the pension fund's investments in the Philippines when they meet on Tuesday.

But the United States' biggest pension fund would likely put the country under a one-year "cure or observation period," within which the Philippines should improve on areas where it was found deficient.

The expected decision of CalPERS could be considered an improvement from the recommendation of Wilshire Consulting in February to remove the Philippines from the pension fund's list of permissible investment sites.

During the cure period, CalPERS' investment managers will still be permitted to invest in the Philippines although Wilshire had recommended a complete stop in the infusion of investments into the country during the observation period.

While the influential US pension fund has only about $30 million in local stocks, its investment decision can influence other investors to do the same. CalPERS manages around $133 billion in assets, with about $1.8 billion in emerging markets.

A source said that if the country would fail to improve its score in the next annual review, it would already be removed from CalPERS' list of permissible investment sites.

In a score of 1 to 3 (3 being the highest), Wilshire gave the Philippines last February a score of 1.46 using a criteria based on market practices and business conducts, including those related to labor, judiciary and civil liberties. A permissible investment site must have a score of two or above.

The Philippines had argued, in a comprehensive reply sent to Wilshire and CalPERS, that the scoring had at least nine cases of inaccuracies and seven cases of inconsistencies.

DTI pushing for tariff hikes

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has started pushing for tariff increases on several products at the Cabinet-level Tariff and Related Matters Committee ahead of the scheduled duty changes next year.

A source said Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas wanted to initiate the tariff changes earlier to give economic managers more time to review the changes and the businessmen to assess the impact of higher duties on their operations.

The government had been slow in making adjustments in tariff rates in the past years as it opted to wait until the new tariff schedules were in place before initiating changes demanded by industries. Roxas had kept close to his chest what industries would get. Among the sectors that have filed for higher tariff protection are petrochemicals, paper, automotive industry and steel.

The source said Roxas had informed his colleagues in the TRM that the World Trade Organization rules allowed tariff changes before the application of the new levels. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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Napocor slashes requirements

By Clarissa S. Batino

RUNNING a fine-tooth comb on its cash requirements, the National Power Corp. has reduced the size of its offshore borrowing this year to $1.2 billion from $2 billion.

The state-run power firm has even managed to slash from $1.4 billion last year the size of this year's foreign funding.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said Napocor's lower funding requirement should lessen funding risks that the government was facing this year and calm markets unnerved by the size of the power firm's debts.

Analysts and investors have expressed concern that Napocor's huge requirement may add more pressure to a fiscal position already burdened with piles of public debts and huge borrowings.

The national government had to borrow at least $900 million more to complete a $2.4-billion requirement this year.

With two $250-million loans already in the pipeline and with about $200 million raised from the sale last month of zero coupon bonds, Napocor only has to raise some $500 million by the second half of the year.

It sold $400 million worth of zeroes to Goldman Sachs a month ago, netting around $195 million.

"If these borrowings are successful, Napocor needs only to borrow $500 million," Camacho, who also chairs the power firm, said.

Sources said Napocor would complete by June a $250-million bond issue backed by the Overseas Private Investment Corp. as well as a $250-million borrowing to be guaranteed by the Asian Development Corp.

"After going through its cash requirements line-by-line, Napocor has trimmed the level of funds it has to borrow this year to $1.2 billion. Now, the funding risk for the government is significantly lower than earlier perceived," Camacho said.

First-quarter budget gap narrows to P57.5B

A RECONCILIATION of spending numbers has reduced the preliminary budget deficit in the first quarter to about P57.5 billion, a level closer to the government's target of P55.2 billion.

Last week, the initial deficit number was P3 billion lower because of a higher level of preliminary expenditures that was slowly being reconciled.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the government's expenditures were on track, except for the advanced notices of cash allocation for the government's P4-billion clothing and incentive benefits of state workers.

Sources said there was double-counting in the spending item called "constructive cash," or the non-cash portion of foreign loan not covered by notices of cash allocation.

Usually, a creditor or a donor pays a supplier directly, but the payment will be booked as constructive cash. It may also take the form of an equipment.

ABS-CBN shelves plan to list on Singapore bourse

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. has shelved plans to list its holding company for international operations on the Singapore stock exchange, saying the firm's revenues have remained "below minimum standards."

"We still plan to list (the international unit) but within the next five years," ABS-CBN chief financial officer Randolph Estrellado told reporters. "We won't hit it (revenue standard) this year."

Estrellado said while waiting for conditions to improve, ABS-CBN Global Holdings Inc. would expand into Europe to cater to large Filipino communities there, particularly those in Italy and Germany, to raise revenues to meet the minimum standards.

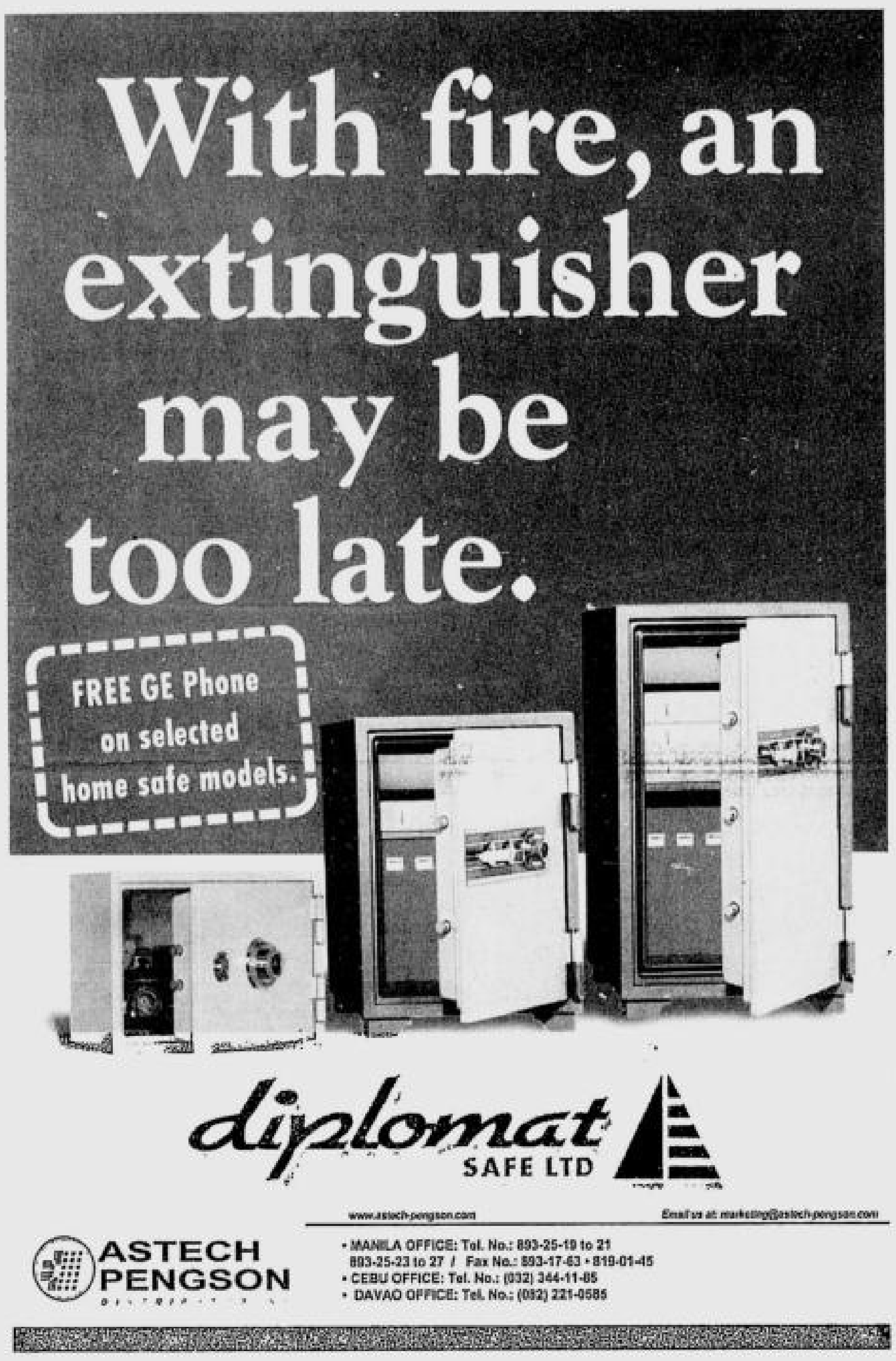
"In Italy, there are more than 100,000 overseas Filipino workers there with better standards of living than in the Middle East, so we know there is a market," he said.

Raising funds for overseas expansion was part of ABS-CBN's strategy to reach a wider market, especially in view of sluggish domestic revenue.

Little money, though, will be needed to fund the expansion into Europe, given the satellite service provider that beams ABS-CBN shows out to the Middle East can also transmit programs to Europe, Estrellado said.

At present, ABS-CBN Global has 160,000 subscribers, of which 120,000 are in the United States while the rest live in the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East.

The offshore firm's revenue in 2002 grew 36 percent, as more program subscribers signed up to watch ABS-CBN shows. *Elena R. Torrijos*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BSP allows use of palay receipts as collateral

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has allowed farmers to use their palay negotiable warehouse receipts as collateral with a value equivalent to 80 percent of their crops' worth.

In an interview on Friday, BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said banks that would lend using the new instrument could use their exposure as compliance to a law that required them to support the government's agrarian reform program.

The new financial instrument was introduced after the National Food Authority decided to issue the palay receipts as part of the inventory process that would allow farmers to store their products in NFA-operated warehouses.

The Macapagal administration, according to Reyes, has been trying to institute policies that will spur growth among micro, small and medium enterprises, including those in the farm sector.

Local group buys Trilux factory

A LOCAL lighting company has purchased the manufacturing facility of Trilux Lighting Inc., luminaire production subsidiary in the Philippines of Trilux-Lenze Gmbh+Co KG of Arnsburg, Germany.

Under the leadership of Filipino entrepreneur Jojo Reyes of Emerald Sales Center Corp., the asset purchase agreement, including an exclusive manufacturing license agreement, was formally inked on Sept. 30, 2002.

With the successful purchase of the factory, Reyes formed Technical Lighting Philippines and had since attracted foreigners to invest in the luminaire manufacturing facility located at the Granville Industrial Complex in Carmona, Cavite.

Come, join PARP's 4th National Convention

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

ON Saturday next week, 26 April, the Philippine Association of Retired Persons, the country's largest organized group of SSS and GSIS retirees, is holding its 4th National Convention in the Insular Life Auditorium. That is on the 12th floor of the Insular Life Building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.

Insular Life president Vicente Ayllon has generously provided the convention site absolutely for free. Delegates from all over the country will attend the event. If you are not doing much on the 26th, and you are a retiree, even if you are not a PARP member, why don't you come over and join us? You are guaranteed a most interesting and enjoyable day. You will pay no registration fee, only a small amount for the souvenir program. Lunch and snacks are on the house. There is a lot of parking space at the back of the building.

The convention theme is "The Retirees' Role in Building a Strong Republic." President Macapagal-Arroyo has sounded the call. What can the retirees do to help? Registration is from 8 a.m. to 9 a. m. The convention opens with the national anthem and the retirees' prayer. Then, president Amado F. Cabaero has some brief remarks of welcome.

Quickly following will be a briefing—on Power Point, of course—by Secretary Eduardo Ermita, presidential adviser on the peace process. He will talk on the progress and prospects of the peace talks with the various alphabet rebel groups, NDF/NPA, MNLF, RAM. But the focus will be on the MILF. What is Malaysia's role in the talks? What is the government's policy on secession and disarmament? How can the retirees help? An open forum will follow. Let us get the answers to these and other questions directly from the man in the know.

After a brief snack, we will be treated to the main attraction of the day, a panel discussion with the keynote speaker, the Honorable Jose de Venecia, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He will talk on one of the most important and controversial topics of the day: the proposed parliament. Why is the parliamentary better than the presidential form of government? What kind of parliament will it be? How will a parliament solve our economic problems? How will the retirees fit in? Let us hear the answers to these and other nagging questions from the man who heads the move to change the form of our government.

The panel of resource persons consists of lawyers Salvador Panelo and Antonio Bernas Jr., and columnist Dean de la Paz. We are in for a lively discussion. Then, we will break off for a lunch of chicken galantina at Insular Life's executive lounge. After lunch, Jose Apolo will talk on an interesting subject, herbal soap making. If you are doing nothing at retirement, you may want to keep busy by making your own herbal soap at little cost.

The convention ends on a high note. Dr. Shelley Ann de la Vega will give the last talk. Dr. De la Vega is a University of the Philippines professor and Philippine General Hospital practitioner on gerontology, the comprehensive study of aging and the problems of the aged. Her topic is "Who Wants to Live Forever?—A Short Talk on Longevity," also presented on PowerPoint. No, she is not selling a wonder drug to reverse aging or anything like that. But she has some engaging and practical tips on how to grow old gracefully. The lecture gives you a new insight on the phenomenon of aging. An open forum follows. With more and more Filipinos living longer and longer, gerontology or geriatrics, a relatively new line of specialization in the Philippines, has assumed greater significance. After the lecture, I am sure you will feel better.

You are most welcome to join us. Take a day off from your humdrum retiree's life.

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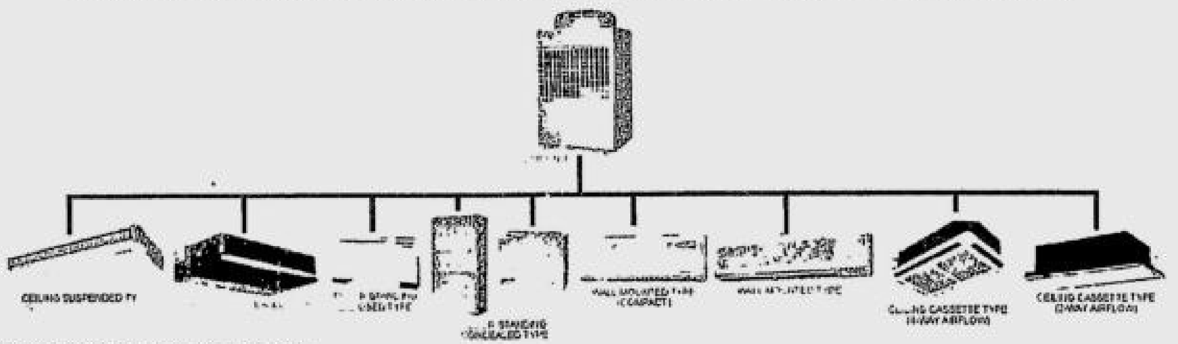
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Motorcycle makers oppose entry of new players

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

LOCAL motorcycle assemblers are asking the government to limit the entry of new players and maintain tariffs on imported bikes through 2010 to rev up investments in the industry.

Former Motorcycle Development Program Participants Association (MDPPA) president Mateo B. Ocenar said the industry could not feasibly accommodate 19 new players in the 230,000-unit-a-year market currently served by seven players led by Honda, Kawasaki, Yamaha and Suzuki.

MDPPA has urged the Board of Investments to scrutinize the application of 19 Chinese motorcycle assemblers to ensure that they comply with the requirements on investment ($2 million for a part-making facility), employment generation and technology transfer.

Ocenar said the increase in the number of competitors fighting for a small market would discourage investments in assembly and parts manufacturing in the country. He said existing players were already faced with stiff competition from motorcycle imports, whose share of the market has risen to 30 percent including the smuggled units.

Japanese assemblers have complained about the influx of Chinese motorcycle brands that were mostly rip-offs of Honda models and were being brought into the country at prices substantially lower than the domestic price. China is seen as the biggest threat to the local motorcycle industry with the Mainland's market of 10 million units a year.

Aside from limiting the number of market players, Ocenar said the MDPPA has petitioned to maintain duties on imported completely built motorcycles at 30 percent up to 2010. CBU tariffs on motorcycles are scheduled to go down to 5 percent by next year.

Ocenar said maintaining the tariff protection levels would give assemblers more time to improve their operations before they face imports.

He said the MDPPA has likewise sought for the reduction in the tariff on the industry's completely knocked down (CKD) imports to one percent from 3 percent in order to lower the cost of importing their assembly kits.

LRT-1 EXTENSION PROJECT

Canadian firm expected to seek compensation

By Abigail L. Ho

CANADIAN engineering-construction firm SNC-Lavalin Inc. will seek compensation from the government if it loses the $865-million Light Rail Transit Line 1 extension project (LRT 6) to another entity in a required Swiss challenge.

This compensation, explained Transportation Assistant Secretary Robert Castanares, would cover the amount spent by SNC-Lavalin in the preparation of the feasibility study on the project that would extend the existing LRT Line 1 to Bacoor, Cavite.

The decision to subject the project to a Swiss challenge was contained in an opinion issued by the Department of Justice.

Since SNC-Lavalin's proposal for the LRT Line 1 extension project was unsolicited, the DOJ said the project would have to go through a Swiss challenge to give other interested entities a chance to bid for it. Under this system, other offers will be entertained and the original proponent will have to match the best bid.

Castanares said the DOTC was preparing the draft terms of reference for the Swiss challenge.

SNC-Lavalin late last year threatened to pull out of its joint venture agreement with the Light Rail Transit Authority as the LRT Line 1 extension project showed no clear signs of taking off.

But a settlement agreement was approved between the LRTA and SNC-Lavalin on Jan. 9, extending their joint venture agreement for another 90 days.

The LRT Line 1 extension project will add another 12 kilometers to the existing Line 1 that runs from Monumento in Caloocan City to Baclaran. The first phase of the project will extend the railway to Bacoor in Cavite, with a projected ridership of 400,000 passengers per day.

It may later be extended further to Imus beside Bacoor and then to Dasmariñas, also in Cavite.

Destiny Cable investing P300M for expansion

DESTINY Cable Inc. is investing at least P300 million over the next three years for the expansion of its cable Internet business.

Beda Mañalac, vice president of Destiny's parent firm Solid Group Inc., said the investment would enable Destiny to introduce different service tiers.

"The additional equipment will enable Destiny to improve Internet service delivery and provide true broadband access to a wider market," he said.

The bulk of the investments would be used to purchase additional data equipment and back-end solutions, and to upgrade of its cable system.

Aside from employing a new system, the cable operator is also working with major data equipment vendors for the supply of advanced bandwidth management equipment that can efficiently manage data bandwidth on Destiny's broadband network.

Destiny has so far invested more than P500 million in its cable Internet service. The new investments are seen to help reinforce Destiny's position in the cable Internet market as one of the operators with the most technologically advanced network infrastructure. *Abigail L.Ho*

Smart completes GSM upgrade test

SMART Communications Inc. said it had successfully completed the first test voice and data call in the Philippines using the Enhanced Data Rates for GSM/Global Evolution (EDGE) solution for its GSM cellular network.

Done using Smart's GSM test-bed facility and Nokia's Edge solution, the test call paves the way for the deployment of EDGE in SMART's GSM mobile phone network on a nationwide basis in the near future.

EDGE will allow Smart to offer its subscribers higher quality network services and wider coverage. EDGE has at least three to four times higher voice capacity and data transmission rates than GSM technology in use today.

Smart subscribers will thus be able to soon access more advanced mobile services offerings such as enhanced multimedia messaging, Web browsing, data transmission, and video and audio streaming.

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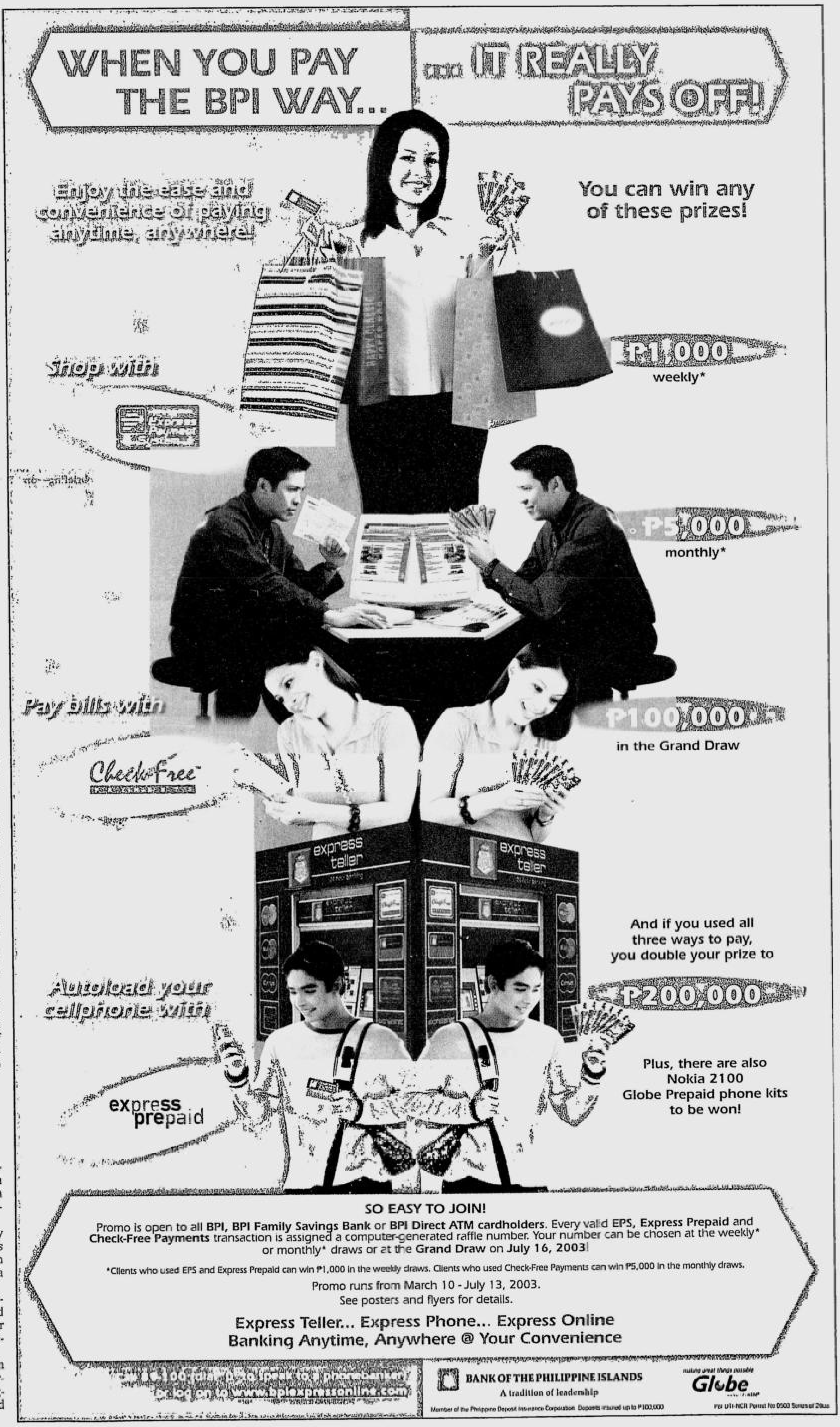

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SARS is a computer virus

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

I HAVE been working with the World Health Organization to find out how SARS came into being. I went to Guangdong province and discovered that a hacker was embedded in a computer (please don't ask me how) and the computer virus jumped to its host. It quickly mutated, transforming itself into the first-ever binomial virus. When viewed under a microscope, the virus does not appear as a blob or cell. Instead, it is composed of ones and noughts. This naughty virus attacks the immune system, causing a slipped disc and a cute shortage of breath. This computer virus can pass through Windows without pane and, once it bytes, it really hertz. It is difficult to Monitor but once a biologist saw it under the microscope, he yelled ICU there and modem down with antibiotics.

The virus is not spread by close contact because 86 people in the AMOY HOTEL caught it, all businessmen. No waiters, waitresses, receptionists or chambermaids were affected, and this led me to the conclusion that it was spread by email. This fact was corroborated by the fact that all the victims had cell phones or laptops; none of the service people did. The only way to stop the virus from spreading is to switch off the Internet for a month. Speculation that cockroaches spread it is sheer nonsense. If that were true, the authorities would have found the "ip-is" center. The masks are not only useless—they actually help the virus breed—so they are known as the masks of sorrow.

Unfortunately, during the visit, I contracted the disease and my computer is infected. If you are reading this article in the INQUIRER, you are safe, but if you are reading it on the Internet, your computer is now infected and you are in grave danger. Please send this warning to all your friends.

* * *

An alien, who came from Mars
Went searching for young girls in bars.
He contracted a virus
From a girl called Iris,
And next day was found dead from SARS.

* * *

Two guys, named Jekyl and Hyde
Took a couple of chicks for a ride,
They said we will phone ya
But developed pneumonia,
Regrettably, both of them died.

* * *

It took me just two minutes to write the above. I have also rewritten another nursery rhyme, which is hopelessly outdated. The original was:

* * *

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet.
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a big spider
that sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

* * *

It now reads:

* * *

Little Miss Muffet
with friend Warren Buffett
Were teaching the Kurds how to play.
An American spied her
and dropped bombs beside her
And blew all the poor Kurds away.

* * *

After years of sleeping, like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, the stock market has suddenly come back to life. Brokers, who had not been seen for years and were presumed to have died or emigrated, suddenly returned to call their clients with no explanation for their long absence. The problem is that these brokers, or agents as I prefer to call them, work entirely on commission, so when the market is going down, they just disappear and sell life insurance, pyramid schemes or memorial plots. This is understandable as they need to survive, but it leaves the poor client in the lurch with no one to turn to.

He is enticed into the market when it is active and rising, but when the trend changes for the worse, instead of telling the client to cut his losses, he is just abandoned. Without professional advice, he just hangs on to his stocks, watching them fall 20 percent, 40 percent, 60 percent, until he becomes so depressed that he sells his shares at the bottom. I know this is true because I get scores of emails every week complaining about this practice. I see no answer to the problem because brokers cannot afford to pay agents when the market is dormant. They even have to lay off staff in the back office and research department since they are not revenue-producing. All I can advise is that you should not trade with agents who appear and disappear like the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland. Some brokers stick it out even if they cannot cover their expenses, and these should be the people you should cultivate. After all, you wouldn't go to a doctor who only turns up at his clinic occasionally.

There is something I can do and I will do it next week. I will republish the 10 Commandments, which I wrote just over a year ago when I started my column. The first two are the most important and I will cover them in detail. This will allow readers to buy and sell stocks in such a way that they will be in the market while it is going up and out when it is going down. It will also ensure that your trading will be profitable providing you do not deviate from these commandments. The data you absolutely MUST HAVE is the support and resistance levels of all the active stocks, updated daily when necessary.

It will mean that you will be out of the market for long periods, so you must have patience. Last year, I was out of the market 95 percent of the time, and I only traded five times in the leaders. But while the Phisix fell 12.8 percent, my modest portfolio rose by 37 percent, beating the index by 50 percent. I still have the GLOBE that I recommended at P410, now P665, plus TEL, which was then P226 and is now P370. Both are up 60 percent.

Next week, I will forgo all the limericks and most of the jokes so as to concentrate on this important task. I want you to cut it out and follow the instructions religiously. They are quite simple and require no detailed knowledge of technical analysis, though of course that would be an advantage. Anyone can do it, but you must get rid of your ego and be totally disciplined. If you can afford to buy the book "Market Wizards" by Jack Schwager, do so, but it is rather expensive—almost P4, 000.

Anyway, I will tell you how he found the secrets of the top 30 traders who were consistently successful over a long period of time. They traded futures, commodities, currencies and stocks, but the principles remain the same. I will explain his findings in detail and relate them to my own 50 years experience in the stock market, mostly in London. Be sure not to miss next week's article.

mrbearbull@hotmail.com

Time to mend rifts, SEC tells new board of stock exchange

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission is calling on the new board of the Philippine Stock Exchange to win back its constituents and strengthen its compliance and surveillance operations.

In a stockholders' meeting on Friday, the PSE elected a new board of directors, with RCBC Securities Inc.'s Alicia Arroyo emerging as the new chair and former Finance Secretary Ernest Leung remaining as president.

Also elected were stockbrokers Rodolfo Cruz, treasurer; Reynaldo Reyes, assistant treasurer; Francisco Villaroman, corporate secretary; and Aissa Encarnacion, assistant corporate secretary.

SEC Chair Lilia Bautista told reporters last week that she asked the new board to make sure stockbrokers would know all the issues and be aware of the fact that the stock exchange was no longer theirs alone.

A group of brokers led by AB Capital Securities Inc.'s Filomeno Francisco boycotted the election to protest what they saw as an "unfair" and "illegal" process.

Francisco's group was insisting on the election of non-broker representatives to the PSE board through a free ballot system rather than an appointment process by the PSE nomination and election committee led by the SEC.

Non-brokers were crucial in the election of the PSE chair last year.

Under the rules drafted by the PSE elections committee, four of the eight non-broker seats representing sectoral interests (issuer, market participant and investor) were subjected to free elections, but the remaining four independent directors were appointed by the committee.

The SEC has defended its actions, saying the stock exchange has yet to comply with the Securities Regulation Code and bring down ownership of the PSE to 20 percent.

The SEC's Bautista said the commission would also direct the new PSE board to "straighten" its compliance and surveillance monitoring in view of "disturbing" reports that she had received.

"Some brokers are doing some manipulation, so we have to address those issues," Bautista said.

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Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,200,000	1,400,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,300,000	1,500,000
Baguio Country Club	550,000	600,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	70,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	-	80,000
Camp John Hay	200,000	230,000
Canlubang	400,000	500,000
Canyonwoods	-	150,000
Capitol Hills	110,000	125,000
Celebrity Sports Club	150,000	180,000
Club Filipino	100,000	130,000
Evercrest "A"	-	80,000
Forest Hills "A"	150,000	185,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	190,000
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	250,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	200,000	230,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	200,000	250,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	11,000,000	-
Manila Golf (Individual)	10,000,000	10,600,000
Manila Polo	-	2,450,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	450,000	550,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	-	700,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	600,000
Metropolitan Club "A"	100,000	120,000
Metropolitan Club "B"	-	130,000
Mimosa (Individual)	96,000	110,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	260,000	325,000
Montemar (Individual)	35,000	-
Mt. Malarayat (Individual)	-	300,000
Mt. Malarayat (Corporate)	-	500,000
Puerto Azul		100,000
Punta Fuego		500,000
Quezon City Sports Club		200,000
Rockwell		380,000
Royale Tagaytay "A"	-	Please Call
Sherwood Hills "A"	-	75,000
Sherwood Hills "B"	80,000	120,000
Sherwood Hills "C"	-	200,000
Sta. Elena "A"	-	1,450,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)		250,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	120,000
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	400,000
Tagaytay Highlands	700,000	800,000
[illegible] Highlands	650,000	720,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	125,000	160,000
Valley Golf	270,000	330,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	-	6,600,000

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IFC loans seen as clincher to Ondeo's plans for Maynilad

THE INTERNATIONAL Finance Corp.'s decision on a debt-for-equity swap arrangement with Maynilad Water Services Inc. will make or break French firm Ondeo Services Inc.'s bid to pursue an amicable settlement with the government and remain as a major shareholder of Maynilad, according to persons familiar with the matter.

Sources told the INQUIRER that Ondeo (formerly Suez Lyonnais des Eaux), Benpres Holdings Corp.'s partner in Maynilad, is asking the IFC for some $152 million equivalent to an 11-percent stake in Maynilad.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System confirmed Ondeo was seeking loans from the IFC to pay for Maynilad's bridge loans that matured in February.

For the fifth time, Maynilad asked for a reprieve from its creditors that included Citibank NA, BNP Paribas, Barclays Capital, Tokai Bank of Japan and Coface of France.

Maynilad obtained in 1999 some $136 million worth of bridge loans to pay its debts and as a working capital.

"Ondeo is seeking term loans worth $152 million from the IFC to cover for short-term loans that have lapsed, and they said this is crucial in their overture to reach a settlement with the MWSS and remain a major shareholder in the water utility," a person familiar with the matter said.

IFC is the investment arm of the World Bank.

Sources said after two consecutive presentations, Ondeo had failed to convince the MWSS board of trustees to let it continue providing water distribution services in the western zone of Metro Manila.

"MWSS board chairman Bayani Fernando wants to see their concrete plans because they have failed as an operator in the first five years. How will they effectively manage the remaining 20 years?" one source said.

Despite failing twice, Ondeo has reportedly been given another chance to present revisions to its business plan in the coming weeks.

Christine A. Gaylican

Stocks seen higher on war windfall

From page B1

the first quarter rose 31 percent to P2.16 billion from the same period last year, while profits hit P107 million in the quarter.

Roxas said the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. still had room for an increase because of its low price earnings ratio.

Online investment consultant BPI Trade said the stock market broke successive resistance levels last week on stronger investors' confidence in the Philippines.

Gains had been accompanied by improvements in volumes, as buyers continue accumulating stocks.

The optimism was undaunted by negative corporate developments that came out during the week.

The biggest news was about blue-chip Manila Electric Co., the country's biggest distributor of electricity.

Meralco on Thursday predicted a severe blow to its shaky finances after the Supreme Court confirmed a ruling that the company had overcharged customers and must pay refunds.

"We are very saddened by it," Meralco corporate communications chief Elpi Cuna told Reuters. "It will have a heavily negative financial impact on the company."

Meralco had asked the court to reconsider its ruling of last November that the firm should refund customers for excess charges dating back to 1994. But the court stood by its decision, leaving the firm facing a bill that could reportedly cost it up to P28 billion.

Meralco earlier warned that it might post a loss in 2002 and said a large refund would put it in jeopardy of defaulting on debt payments due this year. In 2001, Meralco recorded net income of P1.48 billion. *Reports from Elena R. Torrijos and Reuters*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Friday, April 11, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16	16	16	16	15,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	36	36	35.5	36	328,300
Citystate Savings Bank	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	26	26.5	26	26.5	124,300
First E-Bank Corp.	0.5	0.55	0.5	0.55	150,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	28.5	29	28.5	29	258,200
Philippine National Bank	24.25	25	24.25	25	30,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	10	10	10	10	2,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.4	1.4	95,000
First Abacus Financial	0.55	0.72	0.55	0.72	320,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1310	1310	1310	1310	310
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1015	1030	1015	1030	2,800
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	13.75	14.75	13.5	14.75	81,000
Diversified Fin. Network	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	20,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	0.73	0.73	0.71	0.72	4,560,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	620	660	620	650	13,660
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	1,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.37	5,530,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	352.5	375	352.5	372.5	167,290
Ivantage Corp.	0.38	0.39	0.37	0.39	307,570,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.014	16,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	8.2	8.2	7.6	7.9	591,000
Manila Electric Co. B	11.75	12	11	11.5	3,158,900
Petron Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.02	2.06	8,645,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.42	1.44	1.42	1.44	1,962,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.44	2.6	2.44	2.55	1,904,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.48	0.5	3,320,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.71	0.71	20,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.28	2.3	2.28	2.3	127,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.75	17	16.25	16.5	811,700
RFM Corp.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.77	130,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	57.5	57.5	57.5	31,600
San Miguel Corp. B	67	67	66.5	67	47,200
Universal Robina Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	42,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	210,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	80,000
Ayala Corp.	4.4	4.4	4.35	4.4	2,950,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.36	2.36	2.34	2.36	999,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.029	0.026	0.028	7,600,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	3,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.22	2.22	2.22	2.22	5,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.15	370,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.19	0.125	0.19	520,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.23	0.24	28,550,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	120,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.215	0.25	0.215	0.235	7,160,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	8.5	8.5	8.2	8.3	615,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	200,000
Ionics Inc.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.76	500,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.5	296,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	100,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,700,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	750,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	50,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	1,680,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.195	0.2	0.185	0.195	4,860,000
Music Corp.	.3300	34	33	34	550,000
Philtread Holdings Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.3	21,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	500,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	150,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	400,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.55	0.6	0.55	0.6	120,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.31	0.37	0.31	0.37	450,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.4	515,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	16.75	16.75	16.5	16.5	112,600
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	3,440,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.4	200,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	13.5	14.75	13.5	14.75	464,000
DMCI Holdings Inc. - Pref.	775	775	775	775	20
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10	10	10	10	1,000
Philweb Corp. - Warrants	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	1,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.5	3,119,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	300,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	950,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	1,720,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.96	1	0.96	0.99	6,370,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.14	2.14	2.14	2.14	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.035	0.07	0.035	0.07	12,600,000
SM Development Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	40,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.3	749,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	140,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2	2	2	2	20,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	2,320,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	100,000
Omico Corp.	0.0046	0.005	0.0046	0.005	118,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	50,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	4,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	8,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	50,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	20,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	400,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,334,410	27,080,605.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	426,417,000	327,681,435.00
PRO	26,048,000	28,847,000.00
Mining	120,630,000	1,211,900.00
OIL	12,470,000	63,050.00
GRAND TOTALS:	586,899,410	384,883,990.00

CURRENCIES

April 13, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.927214	1.000000	52.540000
Japan	Yen	0.007748	0.008356	0.439000
United Kingdom	Pound	1.458322	1.572800	82.634900
Hongkong	Dollar	0.118885	0.128218	6.736600
Switzerland	Franc	0.668214	0.720669	37.863900
Canada	Dollar	0.638137	0.688231	36.159700
Singapore	Dollar	0.522374	0.563380	29.600000
Australia	Dollar	0.562186	0.606318	31.855900
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.459649	2.652731	139.374500
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.247257	0.266667	14.010700
Brunei	Dollar	0.520907	0.561798	29.516900
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000105	0.000113	0.005900
Thailand	Baht	0.021654	0.023354	1.227000
UAE	Dirham	0.252454	0.272272	14.305200
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.078500	56.664400
Argentina	Peso	0.321391	0.346620	18.211400
Brazil	REAL	0.287687	0.310270	16.301600
Denmark	Kroner	0.134770	0.145349	7.636600
India	Rupee	0.019603	0.021142	1.110800
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.244036	0.263193	13.828200
Mexico	New Peso	0.086680	0.093484	4.911600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.506452	0.546209	28.697800
Norway	Kroner	0.126802	0.136756	7.185200
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016064	0.017325	0.910300
South Africa	Rand	0.119430	0.128805	6.767400
Korea	Won	0.000754	0.000813	0.042700
Sweden	Kroner	0.109280	0.117858	6.192300
Syria	Pound	0.022077	0.023810	1.251000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.026720	0.028818	1.514100
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000581	0.000627	0.032900

INTEREST RATES

April 11, 2003
MART 1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 April 8, 2003 (%)	MART1 April 4, 2003 (%)
1 Month	7.9496	7.9400
3 Months	8.3135	8.3904
6 Months	8.9333	8.9417
1 Year	9.5462	9.5539
2 Years	10.5885	10.5962
3 Years	11.5788	11.5923
4 Years	12.4212	12.4346
5 Years	12.6096	12.6385
7 Years	13.1654	13.1827
10 Years	13.2308	13.2538
20 Years	13.4769	13.5635
25 Years	14.0346	14.1135

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

PLDT appeals FCC rule favoring US firms

By Abigail L. Ho

DOMINANT carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. has asked the US Federal Communications Commission to reverse its order that compelled American telecommunications firms to suspend payments to their local counterparts.

In a 30-page application for review filed with the FCC on Apr. 9, PLDT said the Mar. 10 international bureau decision should be reversed for three reasons: it was in conflict with FCC regulations and precedents, was decided incorrectly and based on 'erroneous' findings.

"The Bureau misapplied the law and improperly accepted bald allegations as fact, in order to conclude that PLDT has engaged in whipsawing, and neither cited nor had any basis for the extraordinary relief it has granted. The order should be reversed," the application stated.

The FCC handed down its March 10 order following claims by US carriers AT&T Corp. and Worldcom Inc. that PLDT was "whipsawing" or putting undue pressure on them to agree to pay higher termination rates by blocking calls from their networks.

Napocor awards coal contracts

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE STATE-RUN National Power Corp. secured two more coal-supply contracts worth about $20.1 million or P1.1 billion through auctions held last Friday.

Industry sources said the China-based Shanxi and Shenhua coal suppliers won contracts for both the Sual and Masinloc power plants.

The contracts provide for 325,000 metric tons of coal each for the 1,200-megawatt Sual plant in Pangasinan and the 600-MW Masinloc plant in Zambales.

The Sual contract was priced at $32 per metric ton for a total of $10.4 million (about P545 million) while the Masinloc contract was rated at $32.53 per metric ton for a total of $10.6 million (about P553 million).

Last Friday's bidding was the second of four batches of calls for tenders to secure Napocor's coal supply needs up to May 2004, which is estimated at 3.13 million metric tons.

In March, Napocor was able to start the series of auctions and secured a first batch of contracts also worth P1.1 billion.

Napocor has set aside P5.6 billion for coal purchases.

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2 Mos.	2.000%	2.250%	2.500%
3 Mos.	2.250%	2.500%	2.750%
6 Mos.	2.500%	2.750%	2.875%
12 Mos.	3.000%	3.500%	3.500%

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Cebu (032)255-7734, 253-3350; Davao (082)222-5001, 222-4280

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THAT MAY NOT BE CRAZY AT ALL

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For inquiries please contact Mr. Robert Zialcita or Ms. Celeste Santillan at
tel. no. 637-0912 loc. 244 or e-mail at csantillan@uap.edu.ph

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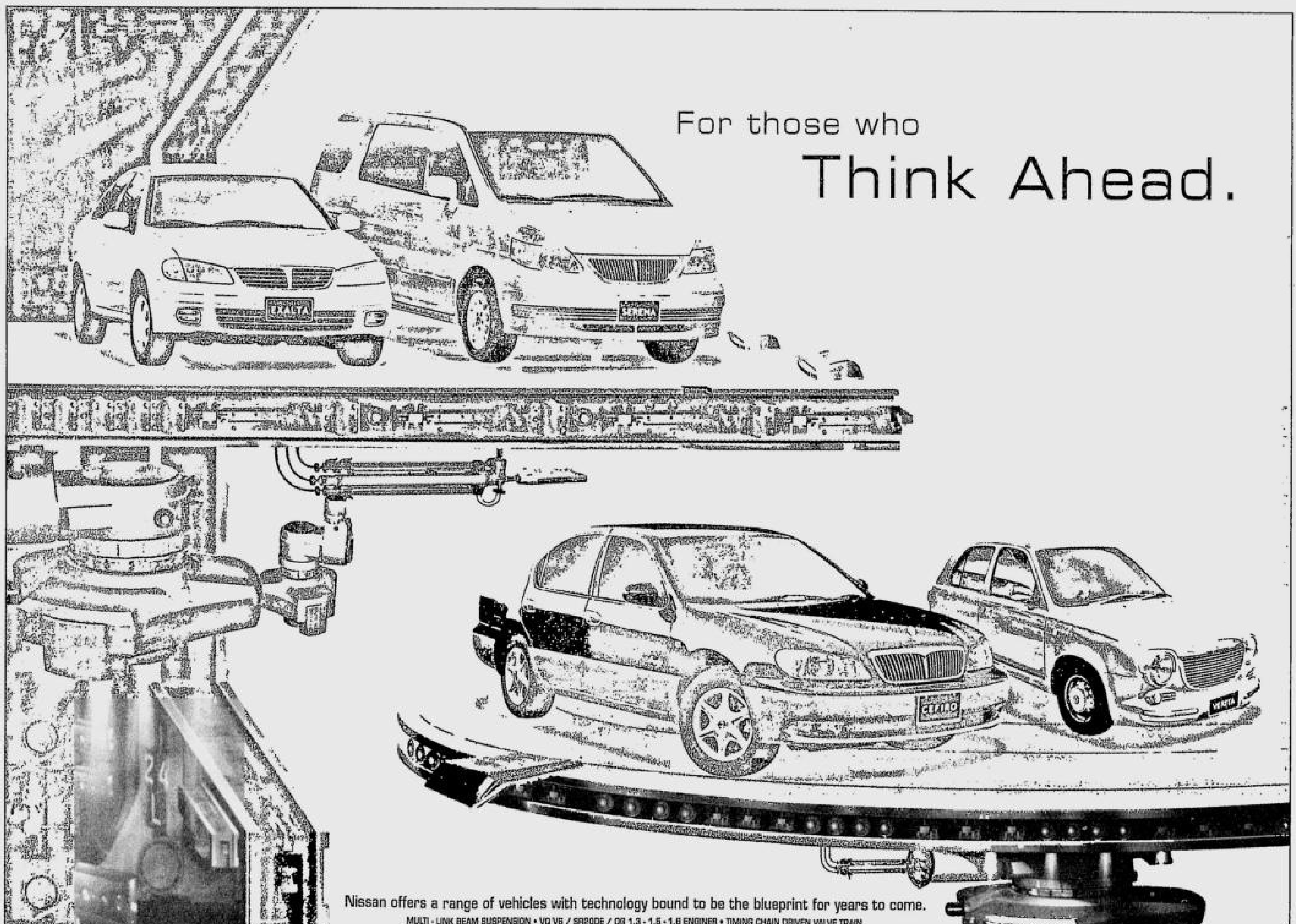

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Moms and babies beating the heat

SUMMER is coming, and with it, diaper rash, which is a common skin problem caused by prolonged contact with a wet or soiled diaper or yeast infections. Since the summer heat makes the symptoms worse, doctors recommend cooling the area by removing your baby's diaper to keep him cool, squirting water directly onto the skin and then gently patting the area dry with a towel. Avoid using diaper wipes that may be too moist and may contain alcohol or oils that may further irritate your baby's sensitive skin. It is also recommended that you apply a zinc-oxide ointment to the affected area. The most important thing is to change your baby's diaper frequently. Considering it's summer and you may be going on vacation with the rest of the family, super-absorbent disposable diapers can be a Godsend.

To make diaper changing even easier, EQ Dry now helps moms tell when it's time to change their babies' diapers with one look. EQ Dry's unique wetness indicator prints fade when the diaper is filled up, allowing moms to get the maximum use of their babies' diapers. They make it so much easier to know exactly the right time for changing, with fewer false alarms. So if the baby is crying and the prints are still bright, you can be sure it isn't his diaper. The wetness indicator prints on EQ Dry diapers make soggy diapers one less thing to worry about.

EQ Dry diapers' special features include a high absorbency core that makes it super absorbent. It also comes with inner leak guards that draw and trap wetness away from baby's skin, which can minimize the risk of diaper rash. Add to this the frontal tape in four colorful designs that you can refasten and adjust for a better fit at more affordable prices, and you've got the assurance that EQ Dry is the first choice and the ultimate answer to baby's comfort and Mom's peace of mind. EQ Dry diapers are available at supermarkets and groceries nationwide.

Diaper changing made easier

CHANGING a diaper is one activity that allows parent and child to engage in tender and intimate communication. Over time, it becomes easier for the parent and child to understand each other. Moms learn to adjust to their children and to their special way of interacting, to teach them how to care for themselves, all while gently helping their babies learn how to touch and to trust. Babies begin to learn about their bodies, about health, safety, and why their bodies are so precious. Being able to communicate clearly through diapering also helps moms make sure that toilet training will be a breeze. Here are a few things you can do to make diaper changing easier.

o First of all, be ready. Make sure that you have all your supplies--clean diapers, baby wipes, a trash bin--within reach on a wide, safe area comfortable for both you and your baby.

o Be in touch with your baby at all times. This means keeping a firm grasp on your baby at all times so he doesn't fall off. Since most diaper changing areas or stations are high up from the floor, even babies who haven't learned to crawl yet are at risk for a fall.

o Communicate. Being in touch also means taking the chance to talk and play with your baby. Just at getting talked through an unfamiliar process puts adults at ease, babies are soothed by the sound of your voice. Also, when you tell him things like "I'm picking you up so we can put a fresh, clean diaper on you", they learn to associate certain sounds with certain actions, which will make it easier for them to learn language.

o Keep it positive. It is important that your baby sees diaper changing as a positive experience, not something that makes him think "Uh-oh" and start crying. When possible, take this chance to play with your baby--in the moments when the diaper is off they'll want to wiggle their lower limbs, so involve them in a little game. Teach them about body parts by singing about finding toes, tummies, belly buttons, or play peek-a-boo with a clean diaper.

TransCo

National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date: March 28, 2003
LOAN NO.: MIYAZAWA
CONTRACT NO.: Sp00.SMSRTL.Lw.-0304

1. The *National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO)* has received a loan from the *Miyazawa Funds* in Japanese Yen currency, and it is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for *Furnishing, Delivery of Transmission Line Materials and Construction of San Manuel – San Roque 230kV DC/ST Transmission Line Project on Turn Key Basis.*
2. The *National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO)* invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for Furnishing, Delivery of Transmission Line Materials and Construction of San Manuel – San Roque 230kV DC/ST Transmission Line Project On Turnkey Basis (Sp00.SMSRTL.Lw–0304).
3. Bidders may obtain further information from and inspect and acquire the bidding documents at the *Office of the Manager, Bids and Contracts Management Department, 2nd Floor, Building 2, National Transmission Corporation, Agham Road corner Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City (Zip Code 1104), Philippines, Telephone Number: 922-0401, Fax Number: 921-2308.*
4. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidders starting **April 4, 2003** upon submission of a written application to the above office, and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of *Ten Thousand Pesos (Php P10,000.00).*
5. A two-envelope bidding procedure will be adopted. Bidders are to submit simultaneously two (2)-sealed envelopes, one (1) containing the technical proposal and one (1) containing the price proposal. Initially only the technical proposals are opened. Technical proposals which are submitted by non-qualified bidders or which are not substantially responsive are rejected. The substantially responsive technical proposals that have been submitted by qualified bidders are discussed with the bidders and the bidders are requested for full compliance to the specification. If the bidders deem necessary, he may submit a supplementary price proposal that only contain the changes in price resulting from the changes in the technical proposal. The original price proposal and the supplementary price proposal are opened simultaneously in public.
6. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of *Sixty Six Thousand and Two Hundred Fifty US Dollars ($66,250.00).* The bid security must be included with the technical proposal. The deadline for the submission of bids will be on *June 4, 2003 at 1:30 p.m.* at the aforementioned address. Late submission will be rejected.
7. The technical proposals will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of bidder's representatives who choose to attend.
8. The price proposals will be opened in the presence of the bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the time and date and at the address to be advised by the Employer after approval of the evaluation of the technical proposals.
9. TRANSCO reserves the right to reject any or all Bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
10. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) WINIFREDO SM. PANGILINAN
Chairman
Bids Award Committee

(PDI - Apr 5 & 14 & 19 2003)

TransCo

National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. Contract : Sp02.DBTL.Le-0359 Construction and Erection of Dasmariñas - Biñan 230 kV Steel Tower Double Circuit Transmission Line Project
2. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all construction plant, labor, materials, supplies, tools and equipment (except for materials and equipment specified to be furnished by TRANSCO), constructing complete the 230 kV Steel Tower Transmission Line Project.
3. The Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid are as follows from Internal Cash Generation

   Schedule I (Dasmariñas S/S to Tower No. DB-22) - P 48,732,381.00
   Schedule II (Tower No. DB-22 to Biñan S/S) - P 54,093,330.00
4. Application for Eligibility is open to Filipino contractors who have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract to be bid/project with the following License and Registration Particulars as specified in the Eligibility Documents

   For Schedule I:
   License Particular at least Category AA - Specialty in Electrical Works
   Registration Particular at least Large A - Electrical Works

   For Schedule II:
   License Particular : Category AAA - Specialty in Electrical Works
   Registration Particular : Large B - Electrical Works
5. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by Transco in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.
6. Eligibility Documents and Forms will be available for issuance on **April 15, 2003** at the Bids and Contracts Management Department, Second Floor, Building No. 2, Power Center, Agham Road corner Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, Telefax No.: 921-2308 upon presentation of Letter of Intent, Contractor's License and a payment of non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 per copy.
7. Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Forms, documents and statements shall be on or before May 14, 2003 and shall be submitted at the registration office and address mentioned above. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
8. Contractor, not yet included in the Transco's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A Certificate of Registration will be issued to contractors upon approval.
   - Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;
   - Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;
   - Taxpayer's Identification Number;
   - Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation, including, in the case of procurement of civil works, non-inclusion in the "blacklist" of contractors issued by the CIAP.
   - Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt;
   - Contractor's License
9. TRANSCO reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all Bids or request for registration without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
10. In view of the emergency nature of the Project, the Contractor may submit Application for Eligibility for two (2) schedules, however, the Contractor shall be allowed to participate only in either Schedule I or II, if evaluated eligible for two (2) schedules.
11. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd) WINIFREDO SM. PANGILINAN
Chairman Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - Apr 12, 14 & 16, 2003)

Clips

Italianni's new GM

ITALIANNI'S Restaurant recently appointed Joel Moquite as general manager of its new SM Bicutan branch, which had opened this February. He has been with the restaurant for six years, starting as a server before he was promoted to trainer. Prior to his appointment, this Civil Engineering graduate was a restaurant manager at Italianni's Greenbelt. Italianni's SM Bicutan is located at the 2nd level of Building A.

New NSP officer

NU SKIN Philippines (NSP) announces the appointment of its new marketing and communications manager Arlene Asidao. Arlene joined NSP late 2002 and was assigned to lead a group implementing new strategies strengthening the sales and brand image of products of Nu Skin, Nu Skin Enterprises Inc.'s personal care division, and Pharmanex, its nutritional supplement division. Likewise, Arlene will handle various special events for NSP's distributors. Prior to joining NSP, this alumna of Ateneo de Manila University has held key positions in topnotch companies.

Torok leads UPS

CHARLES A. Adams, president of UPS Asia Pacific, announced his retirement. He will be succeeded this month by Ken Torok, a long-time UPS executive. As presidentof UPS Asia Pacific, Torok will be based in Singapore and responsible for all UPS employees, operations, joint ventures and agent relationships throughout the region. A graduate of North Carolina State University, Torok began his career with UPS in the United States in 1975. He started out as a delivery driver and was promoted through the operational ranks to his most recent position as the managing director of UPS' operations in South Florida.

GROWTH WITH EQUITY IN MINDANAO (GEM) PROGRAM
A Project of the United States Agency for International Development
The General Contractor is THE LOUIS BERGER GROUP, INC.
Tel: (6382) 225-1596 • Fax: (6382) 225-1479
USAID Contract No: 492-C-00-02-00018-00

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY / PREQUALIFICATION AND ENTER INTO INDEFINITE QUANTITY CONTRACTS (IQC)

1 The Philippines has received a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund the cost of the Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program (the Project). A portion of the proceeds of this grant will be used for the construction of Community Infrastructure Program (CIP) subprojects and Mid-Scale Infrastructure Program (MSIP) subprojects for which this Invitation for Prequalification is being issued. The GEM Project Management Office (GEM-PMO) based in Davao City will implement these subprojects.

2 The subprojects will be located primarily in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as well as conflict-affected areas of Mindanao and will include various components in the port, water supply, roads and bridges, irrigation, drainage and flood control, and general civil works categories. Individual construction contract costs will range in value from PhP 500 thousand up to PhP 1.5 million for CIP subprojects and PhP 20 million up to PhP 50 million for MSIP subprojects.

3 In relation to the Designing requirements for these subprojects various engineering studies need to be conducted. This invitation to apply for eligibility/prequalification is issued for the conduct of these studies.

4 Interested contractors will be prequalified for different categories based on their previous experience. For prequalification purposes, the works will be divided into the following Groups based on the desired level of precision of the studies.

A. Topographic Survey / Hydrographic Surveys (Civil Works Projects) with HIGH complexity (contracts amounting to more than PhP 200,000)

B. Topographic Survey / Hydrographic Surveys (Civil Works Projects) with LOW complexity (contracts amounting to less than PhP 200,000)

C. Geotechnical Investigations with HIGH complexity (contracts amounting to more than PhP 100,000)

D. Geotechnical Investigations with LOW complexity (contracts amounting to less than PhP 100,000)

E. Water Supply Projects tests (Water Quality, discharge rate, etc.)

5 Firms will be evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria:

Company Experience
ii Competency of Technical Personnel
iii. Equipment / Testing Laboratory Inventory

6 The top three ranked firms from each of the categories will be awarded Indefinite Quantity Contracts (IQC) with minimum and maximum contract amounts to be negotiated with the winning firms. Job or delivery orders will be issued to the winning firms as studies become necessary. Contract costs will be based on pre-negotiated unit and mobilization costs. The IQC will be valid until the contract ceiling cost is reached or when the contract duration expires.

7 Prequalification is open to licensed/registered firms (applicable to each group and registered through SEC for corporations or DTI for entrepreneurs) from the Philippines. Applications may be made for one or more of the above groups, for consortium or large companies with varied specializations or services.

8 Eligible applicants may obtain the prequalification documents, including the requirements for the company profile and short technical proposal, at the following locations:

Office of the Chief of Party,
Project Management Office
Growth with Equity in Mindanao Program
2nd Floor, 1 Ladislawa Bldg. Ladislawa Ave.,
Buhangin, Davao City 8000, Philippines
Tel (63-82) 225-1569, Fax (63-82) 225-1479
Email gem@mindanao.org

Manila Office
c/o The Louis Berger Group, Inc.
Unit 3, 12/F ExportBank Plaza
Sen. Gil Puyat cor. Chino Roces Avenues
Makati City 1200 Philippines
Tel (63-2) 812-1647, Fax (63-2) 818-8900
Email gemiab@mozcom.com

Cotabato City Office
4/F Flora V. Co Bldg. Don Rufino Alonzo St.,
Cotabato City 9600, Philippines
Tel (63-64) 421-4166
Fax (63-64) 421-1308
Email gemcm@mozcom.com

Zamboanga City Office
4/F VH Wee Building, Veterans Ave.,
Zamboanga City 7000, Philippines
Tel (63-62) 992-3404 to 06
Fax (63-62) 992-3392
Email gemzam@zambo-i-net.net

9 The documents which will be made available from April 14-23, 2003, include the following:

- Required format and content of Company Profile
- Terms of Reference for the various required studies (acquire as needed)
- Terms of Reference and Conditions of the IQC Type of Contracts
- Indicative locations of subprojects
- Other Requirements

5 "Prequalification conferences" will be held only to answer clarificatory questions regarding the above documents for Manila-based firms on April 21, 2003, 9-11 AM at the ExportBank Business Center 24th Floor, ExportBank Plaza, Sen. Gil Puyat cor. Chino Roces Avenues and for Mindanao-based firms on April 23, 2003, 9-11 AM at the GEM PMO Office at the 2nd Floor, Ladislawa 1 Building, Ladislawa Avenue, Buhangin, Davao City.

6 Interested companies must submit a letter of intent to participate in the prequalification, to be submitted at the respective area offices where the documents were obtained. All technical inquiries/clarifications must be directed to Rhett de Guzman of the Infrastructure Design and Construction Supervision Group, and contract-related inquiries to Renato D. Galang of the Contracts Group, at the GEM PMO in Davao City.

7 Application for prequalification must be submitted not later than 3:00 PM, April 28, 2003 at the GEM PMO office in Davao City. Applications may be submitted personally or by courier and received and stamped by our guards not later than the specified deadline and time.

8 GEM reserves the right to accept or reject late applications.

1 GEM will advise the applicants of the results of their application in due course.

PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, M.M.
Telephone 893-1320 ext. 5131 Fax 8401461

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested Contractors to apply for eligibility and if subsequently found eligible, to bid for the project:

Two (2) Years Contract on Service Vehicle Rental for Bacman Geothermal Production Field under Bid/Project No. EDC 02-128

Eligibility Forms / Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Raymond Sison) starting **April 7, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m, Monday thru Friday** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00).

Eligibility Documents must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of **April 22, 2003**.

For purposes of clarification, a pre-bid meeting will be held on **April 24, 2003, 1:30 p.m.** at PNOC-EDC's Bacman Geothermal Production Field (BGPF), Admin Complex at Tublijon, Sorsogon.

Sealed bids in two (2) sets shall be received by the Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than **2:00 p.m. of May 6, 2003** and then to be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI – April 14, 2003)

PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, M.M.
Telephone 893-1320 ext. 5131 Fax 840-1461

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested Contractors to apply for eligibility and if subsequently found eligible, to bid for the project

Annual Contract on Service Vehicle Rental for Samar, Leyte, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, Bicol Region and Cotabato Area under Bid/Project No. EDC 03-029

The Eligibility Forms / Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Raymond Sison) starting **April 3, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00)

For purposes of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 22, 2003, 2:30 p.m.**, at PNOC-EDC's CAC Conference Rm., Ground Floor, Building V.

Eligibility Documents must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of **April 24, 2003**

Sealed bids in three (3) sets shall be received by the Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of **May 6, 2003** and then to be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder(s) whose bid(s) is(are) considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC

BAC Chairman

(PDI – April 14, 2003)

RP disputes McKinsey report, supports Asean

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PHILIPPINES has disputed consulting firm McKinsey and Company's claim contained in its Asean Competitiveness Study that the country no longer supports the Asean's collective thrust to establish free trade accords with major economies.

Trade and Industry Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino said that McKinsey had misconstrued the Philippines' decision to engage in bilateral rather than multilateral discussions for a free trade area with China and Japan as a sign that it was veering away from the Asean.

Aquino maintained that the Philippines would continue to stick by the Asean and that it has opted to conduct direct talks with China and Japan for expanded trade to ensure that its economic interests are served and protected.

Aquino said the Philippines would demand that McKinsey revise its findings on the Philippines lest claim create animosity with its peers in the Asean.

Aquino said the Philippines would reject the creation of a permanent body that would monitor and alert members on their compliance with integration commitments, an oversight body similar to the European Commission.

Aquino said the proposal would only add another layer of bureaucracy in the Asean.

McKinsey had submitted the study during the Asean Economic Ministers Meeting in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR early this month. It urged member countries to fast-track the liberalization of intra-regional trade and harmonize tariffs for non-Asean countries specifically on three major products—electronics, processed food and personal care.

Asean members were generally dissatisfied with the McKinsey study because some of its recommendations were old hat; it failed to come up with country-specific and product-specific analyses; and it omitted the short- to long-term impact of its recommendations.

Philexport backs Japan's moves to improve customs procedures

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINE Exporters Confederation (Phi[illegible]xport) has thrown its support b[illegible]d the proposal of the Japanese [illegible]ernment to improve customs pro[illegible]dures in Asia-Pacific to spur trade.

Philexp[illegible] [illegible]ident Sergio Ortiz-Luis said [illegible]ment that reforms in customs [illegible]ations drafted by the Apec-Busi[illegible] Advisory Council of Japan wer[illegible] reforms sought by local business organizations.

"We do not only endorse the proposal. We have been working closely with the Bureau of Customs, USAID, the Asian Development Bank, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and other development agencies to modernize customs operations in the Philippines," Ortiz-Luis said.

The reforms proposed by Japan cover enhancement of facilitation and security of trade among Asia-Pacific countries.

The Apec-Business Advisory Council of Japan has asked Apec member-countries, including private sector representatives, to consider customs reforms, which include:

- Make appropriate, transparent trade-related procedures;
- Implement paperless trading among Apec member-countries;
- Adopt a common framework for trade-related procedures;
- Adopt a standard electronic format for data handling.

RBAP warns against VAT on banks

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE RURAL B[illegible]kers Association of the Philippines has warned that the imposition of the value added tax on financial institutions would be a big blow to the country's agriculture sector.

"The VAT pa[illegible]ed on to the borrowers (of rural banks) will increase their cost and may stop agricultural production," RBAP president Jerry Coloma Jr. said in a letter to Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho dated April 4.

Echoing the arguments of the Chamber of Thrift Banks and the Bankers Association of the Philippines, the RBAP head noted that the imposition of VAT on the banks would endanger the viability of the rural banking sector, adversely affect the competitiveness of borrowers that were small and medium enterprises and make housing loans less affordable.

Colomo also asked Camacho to consider the following:

- The VAT system is not applicable to banking transactions as there is no value added in lending.
- The VAT system will hit hard the micro and small enterprises which are exempted under the present system. The tax violates the principle of progressive taxation.
- Section 109 of the National Internal Revenue Code specifically exempts bank services from VAT.

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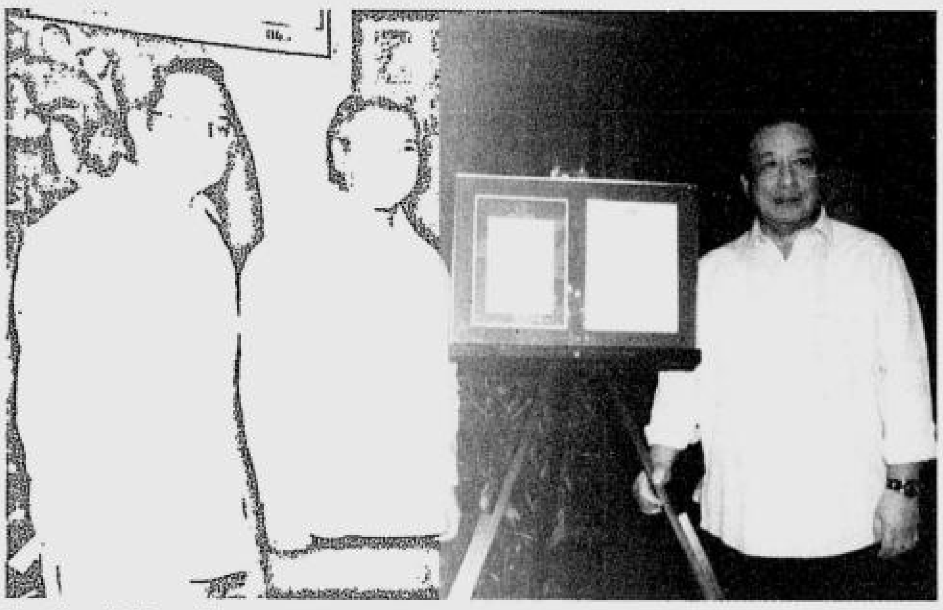

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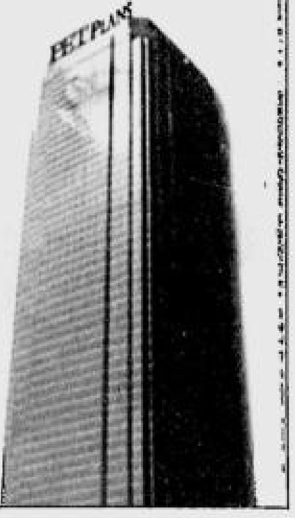

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Bid forms and the Terms of Reference (TOR), together with the General Terms and Conditions and Instructions to Bidders, may be obtained by interested bidders starting on April 25, 2003 from the Office of the Administrative Officer.

The Commission reserves the right to reject any and all bids, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, or to annul the bidding process at any time prior to contract award, to waive any required formality in the bids received or defects therein, or to accept such bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Commission, without giving any reason thereto and incurring any liability to the affected Bidder/s or any obligation to inform the affected Bidder or Bidders of the grounds for the Commission's action; the right to confiscate the bid bond should the winning bidder refuse to accept the contract; and award the bid to the next Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bid.

The Commission does not assume any obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of their bid, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Recommendation to award by the BAC is subject to the final approval by the Chairperson of the Commission.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) ANTONIETA FORTUNA-IBE
Chairperson

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MELITA CHUA TADIOSA
whose picture appears here. Should you have any information regarding the whereabouts of Melita Chua Tadiosa, please contact Mr. Tony Aguirre thru cellphone number 0917-4721945 or (02) 8988000 loc. 2014.

A reward will be given for any information that will lead to her arrest.

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IN THE MATTER OF PETITION FOR CORRECTION OF ENTRY OF PRINCE ARIEL COMPLETO,

ROSELA VALENZUELA TAKAHASHI
Represented by RICARDA GADIN
As her mother and Attorney-in-fact,
Petitioner,

- versus - SP. PROC. NO. 02-104330

LOCAL CIVIL REGISTRAR OF MANILA,
Public Respondent,

And ARIEL CUETO COMPLETO
Private Respondent,

x - x

ORDER

In a Verified Amended Petition for correction of entry, petitioner prays, among others, that after due notice, publication and hearing, an order be rendered directing the Local Civil Registrar of Manila, to make the necessary correction in the Certificate of Live Birth of petitioner's child as follows:

Item No. 1 Name - From : Prince Ariel Valenzuela Completo
To : Prince Ariel Gadin Valenzuela;
Item No. 10 Occupation - From : Housewife
To : None;

and that the entry in No. 18 Date and Place of Marriage of Parents be cancelled.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, set the same for hearing on May 23, 2003 at 8:30 o'clock in the morning before this branch located at Room 512, Fifth Floor, Manila City Hall.

Let copy of this Order be published, at the expense of the petitioner, once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks, in a newspaper of general circulation in Metro Manila, to be selected by raffle pursuant to P.D. 1079.

The Solicitor shall appear at the hearing on behalf of the government. Any interested person who has an opposition may likewise appear.

Furnish the Office of the Solicitor General and City Registrar of Manila with copies of this Order and of the Petition.

SO ORDERED.

Manila, Philippines, January 24, 2003.

CONCEPCION S. ALARCON-VERGARA
Judge

(PDI – March 31 & April 7 & 14, 2003)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT OF MANILA
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 19

IN THE MATTER OF THE INTESTATE ESTATE OF THE LATE ALEGRIA STREBEL VDA. DE FIGUERAS
Sp. Proc. 03-106001

REMEDIOS S. OBANDO CRUZ,
ZENAIDA S. OBANDO-ABEDES
and ANGEL S. OBANDO,
represented herein by his
Attorney-in-fact HONORITA S. OBANDO,
Petitioners,

x--x

ORDER

A verified petition having been filed on **March 12, 2003** by the above-named petitioners, through counsel for the issuance of ***letters of administration*** in favor of **Remedios Strebel Obando-Cruz** over the intestate estate of the late **Alegria Strebel vda. De Figueras** and it having made to appear that the said Alegria Strebel vda. De Figueras died intestate on **May 11, 1979** while a resident of the City of Manila, leaving an estate, the Court hereby orders that said petition be, as it is hereby, set for hearing on **April 24, 2003** at 10:00 a.m. on which date and time all concerned may appear before the Court and show cause why the aforesaid petition shall not be granted.

Let this Order be published at petitioner's expense in a newspaper of general circulation, once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks, before the date of hearing.

Notice of this Order shall be served forthwith upon the known heirs of the testator whose names appear in the petition.

SO ORDERED.

Manila, Philippines, March 19, 2003.

(Sgd.) **ZENAIDA R. DAGUNA**
Judge

(PDI - Mar. 31, Apr. 7 & 14, 2003)

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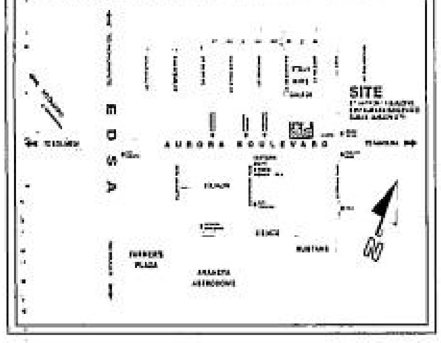

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TELEPHONE : (044)-4560272
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09 April 2003

NOTICE OF RE-BIDDING

RE: INVITATION TO BID NO. CMIPP-CM-04-03

In view of the failure of bidding on **April 08, 2003** for the supply and delivery of construction materials (portland cement) with an approved budget of P2,100,000.00, the NIA-CMIPP, CLSU Compound, Science City of Muñoz, invites all interested BAC accredited and pre-qualified SUPPLIERS/DEALERS to submit bids and participate in the RE-BIDDING scheduled on **April 21, 2003.**

Issuance of Bid Forms to interested and bona fide suppliers/dealers of construction materials shall be from **April 11-15, 2003.**

Sealed Bids in **DUPLICATE forms** accompanied by a Bidders Bond in the form of **CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK OR MANAGER'S CHECK ONLY** and equivalent to **two and one-half percent (2.5%)** of the total approved Purchase Request (PR) budget shall be drop **in the Bid Box for Goods/Supplies and Services at the office of the Project Manager not later than 12:00 NN of April 21, 2003 and will be publicly opened at 1:00 PM of the same date** at NIA-CMIPP Conference Hall.

The NIA-CMIPP/BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect found therein and to accept offer most beneficial to the government. The decision of the BAC in the evaluation of bids is final.

All inquiries pertaining to this Invitation to Bid may be directed to the above mentioned Office.

(Sgd.) **SERAFIN A. PALTENG**
Project Manager

(PDI – April 11 & 14, 2003)

HOME DEVELOPMENT MUTUAL FUND

INVITATION TO BID

The Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG FUND) is inviting all qualified Internet Service Providers to a Bidding for its SDSL Internet Connection (Dedicated Internet Access) for Y2003 with an Agency Budget Ceiling of **P1,100,000.00.**

Terms of Reference and Bid forms may be obtained from the Procurement Section, Task Force-General Services 7th floor Atrium of Makati Building, Makati Ave., Makati City starting **April 21, 2003** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand (P1,000.00) Pesos**

All interested Contractors/Providers are invited to attend the Pre-Bid Conference which shall be held on **April 28, 2003** at the HDMF Multi-Purpose Hall, Rm. 602, 6th floor, The Atrium of Makati Building, Makati Avenue, Makati City at 9:00 o'clock in the morning.

The HDMF reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any informality or accept such bids as may be considered advantageous to the Fund. Further, the HDMF assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for expenses or losses that may be incurred in participating in this bidding.

For further inquiries and/or information, please call Mr. Carlos A. Latorre. Mr. Jose Maria M. Diaz at 811-42-62, 811-42-79 or visit our Corporate Website at http://pag-ibig-fund.com or e-mail us at hdmfgpis@info.com.ph.

BAC-ITR
by:

(Sgd.) **EMMA LINDA B. FARIA**
Senior Vice President, Technical Support Group
Vice Chair

(PDI–April 14 & 21, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
'AMANG' RODRIGUEZ MEDICAL CENTER
Marikina City
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HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (HIBAC)

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY/ELIGIBILITY SCREENING AND TO BID

The 'Amang' Rodriguez Medical Center (ARMC) thru the Hospital Bids and Awards Committee (HIBAC) is re-inviting bids from Accredited Contractors of the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) with minimum license category of "A" and registration of **MEDIUM B** for Building and Industrial Plant for the **PROJECT: CONSTRUCTION OF TWO (2) STOREY HOSPITAL BUILDING** at ARMC.

The dates to be followed are:

1.	Submission of Letter of Intent, PCAB License and Registration (bring Original Copies of Contractor's License) and Issuance of Eligibility Documents		**April 8 to April 15, 2003**
2.	Submission of Duly Accomplished Eligibility Documents		**April 24, 2003**
3.	Posting of Eligible Contractors		**May 12, 2003**
4.	Issuance of Bid Tender Documents		**May 13 & 14, 2003**
5.	Pre-Bid Conference		**May 28, 2003**
6.	Submission of Bids (deadline)	10:00 AM	**June 11, 2003**
7.	Opening of Bids	10:01 AM	**June 11, 2003**

All of the above activities shall be held at the ARMC Conference Room, Second Floor, Administrative Building.

The complete set of bid tender documents may be purchased by the interested eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

HIBAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, waive any formality and award the contract to any bidder whose proposal as evaluated by HIBAC is the most advantageous to the government. The HIBAC assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

The Approved Budget Cost for the project is P20,120,180.96

(Sgd.) **RODOLFO P. GREGORIO, MD, FPCS**
Chairman, HIBAC

(PDI - Apr 8 & 14 2003)

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Jesus said to her, "I am the Resurrection & the Life.
He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies."
John 11:25

Our Dearly Beloved

Henry Yu

(December 30, 1928 to April 10, 2003)

Peacefully joined our Lord at the age of 74 and will be deeply missed by:

His loving wife **Mary**;

Children & children-in-law: **Grace, Eleonor & James Hsia, Harry & Lisa, Elizabeth & David Wang, Vivian & George Chua, Winnie & Wesley Ng, Benjamin;**

Brothers & sisters-in-law: **Victor & Anita, John (†) & Aniceta, Willie (†), James & Bernice, David & Lilian;**

Sisters & brothers-in-law: **Pilar & Ung Han Liong (†), Benita (†) & Peter Chiu (†), Rosa & Gan Ma Im, Lucy & Amado Dy;**

And all his grandchildren, relatives and friends.

His body lies in state at the Capilla de San Francisco, Sanctuario de San Antonio, Mckinley Road, Forbes Park.

His interment will be on Thursday, April 17, 2003 at the Heritage Memorial Park after the memorial services at 8:00 AM.

TE TIONG BIO
alias JAIME TE/CHIQUITO

Has joined his Creator
on April 12, 2003 at the age of 70.

His beloved wife **Juanita Lo**; his children **Willy** and **Goody**, **Josephine**, **Wilson** and **Emily**, **Jenny** and **Johnny**, and **William**; his brothers and their wives **Antonio** and **Teresita**; **Benito** and **Leticia**; **Richard** and **Magdalena**; his sisters **Gloria**, **Mary**, **Virginia** and **Juanita**; his brother-in-law **Chua Bun Chiong**; his grandchildren, nephews and nieces request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Cattleya Funeral Homes, 486 Quezon Avenue, San Fernando City, La Union.

Interment will be on Wednesday,
April 16, 2003 at 9:00 a.m.
at Vista del Cielo, San Juan, La Union.

"And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure because you protect me from the power of death. I have served you faithfully and you will not abandon me to the world of the dead." — **Psalm 16:9-10**

Our Beloved Mommy

JOVITA ROQUE SIBUCAO

Now peacefully rests in the infinite Grace and Goodness of the Lord on April 11, 2003 at the age of 77.

She is at last reunited with our father, **Alejandrino.**

We, her children **Marites** and **Artemio Habitan**, **Mario** and **Loy**, **Manuel**, **Miguel** and **Dina**, **Jun** and **Debbie**, and **Myla** and **Edgardo Viray**; grandchildren, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the family residence at 13 Ilang-Ilang St., Malabon City. Interment will be on Wednesday, April 16, 2003, at 9 a.m. at the Eternal Gardens Memorial Park, Caloocan City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

LEONISA CRUZ MARCELO

of San Nicolas, Pasig City

Retired Teacher – Rizal High School

Peacefully joined her Creator on April 11, 2003 at the age of 92.

Her loving nieces **Ellen** & husband **Edgar** and **Millette**; grandnephews **Gary**, **Nazzar** and **Mon**; relatives, caregivers and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the family residence, Number 1 Caruncho Avenue, San Nicolas, Pasig City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, April 15, 2003 at the Pasig Catholic Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Immaculate Conception Parish Church, Pasig City.

AURORA L. DECENA

Died on April 12, 2003
at the age of 69.

Her loving sisters **Araceli**, **Virginia**, **Amparo**, **Zenaida** & **Erlinda**; brothers-in-law **Carling**, **Bebot**, nephews, nieces, grandchildren and other relatives mourn her passing and wish her eternal rest.

Her remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Cremation will be on Thursday, April 17, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Crematorium, Marikina City.

"And... I will dwell in the House of the Lord... Forever."
Psalm 23

Trinidad H. Villestas

Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord on April 12, 2003 at the age of 94.

Her remains lie in state at the Chapel B, Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, April 16, 2003 at Himlayang Pilipino Memorial Park, Tandang Sora, Quezon City after the 2:00 p.m. services.

"Come to Me,
all you who
are weary
and burdened,
and I will give
you rest."
Matthew 10:39

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SISTER MA. LUZ ANTIAJO PRODIGALIDAD, OSA

who passed away on
April 12, 2003 at the age of 87.

May she rest in Peace!

Funeral Mass will be on April 14, 2003 at the La Consolacion Convent Chapel, 273 Santolan Road, San Juan, Metro Manila.

Interment will follow at the La Loma Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

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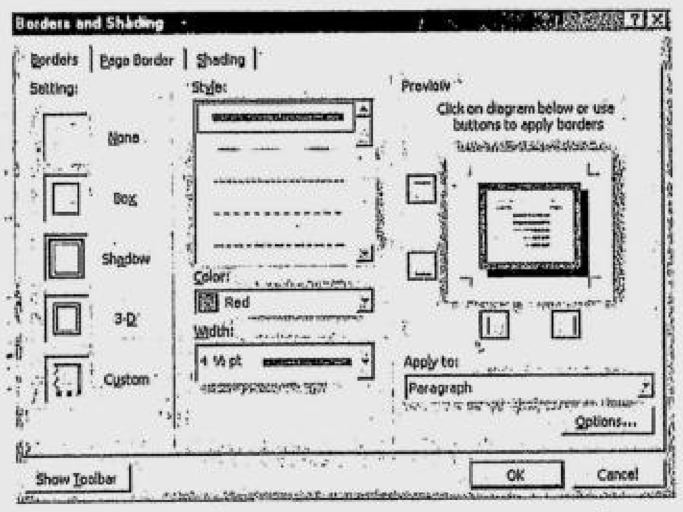

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Highlighting paragraphs in MS Word documents

By Jerry Liao

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MasterCard addressess security concerns in online transactions

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

INTERNET commerce was supposed to be the best thing to happen to business since the invention of computers, but although online sales have been growing, its growth in Asia has been stymied by security concerns.

Mark Patrick, MasterCard vice president for business and technology integration, said in a recent briefing in Singapore that customers have shied away from transacting business through the Internet because of fraud issues.

On the part of the merchants, many have decided against going into e-commerce because they bear all the risk in case the online buyer disputes a purchase charged to his or her card. Some do have e-commerce sites but do not sell big-ticket items through the Internet or some sell only to domestic buyers.

Patrick said these concerns have limited online activity, especially for cross-border transactions. This prevents many enterprises from tapping the world market.

One of the main problems, he said, was authentication. Merchants selling products online could not easily verify the identity of the customer, relying solely on the credit card information.

If the customer denies the purchase, the seller not only lost his product, but he also has to write-off the shipping cost.

Fear of fraud, on the other hand, remains the single biggest barrier to converting online browsers to online shoppers.

MasterCard figures show that total online fraud last year reached $811 million. Although fraudulent transactions account for less than 1 percent of total online sales last year of $81.7 billion, these have still prevented e-commerce from reaching its full potential.

"The percentage of fraud on the Internet is about the same as in the real world but the perception of prevalent fraud is there," he said.

MasterCard, thus, came up with its SecureCode system to help solve the problem of authentication. Patrick says that with SecureCode, the merchants would know if the cardholder is really who he says he is.

"The system provides them the means to know that they are selling to the right person," he said.

The SecureCode system has been rolled out in Europe and MasterCard figures show that the dollar and transaction volume of 1,350 merchants in Spain that are SecureCode-enabled have almost doubled in just three months.

"With the authentication problems out of the way, merchants are now more comfortable selling expensive items online and more buyers are willing to buy," he said.

La Salle university being eyed to develop unique software

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

WHILE engaged in a legal battle over the unique software developed by its former Filipino employee, a local startup has begun negotiations with a local university that would provide the skills required to develop the software into a commercial product, an official told INQ7.net.

Softlabs CEO Frederick Lewis revealed that the company is close to sealing a deal with De La Salle University. The deal involves the institution's assistance in the co-development of the software conceptualized by an ex-employee of the company.

Softlabs has come up with a conceptual framework for a software program codenamed "Moses," which stands for "multiple operating system environment simulator."

This concept, if it becomes commercial, would allow Windows applications to run on non-Microsoft operating system like Linux, according to Softlabs. Moses is also deemed to "level the playing field in the operating system market."

Based on the projections of SoftLabs, the company would be generating revenues of $660,000 in its first year of operations from licensing the software to white box system builders in the United States, and a major strategic original equipment manufacturer, which is IBM.

On its third year, the company expects to hit minimum revenues of $90 million from licenses alone.

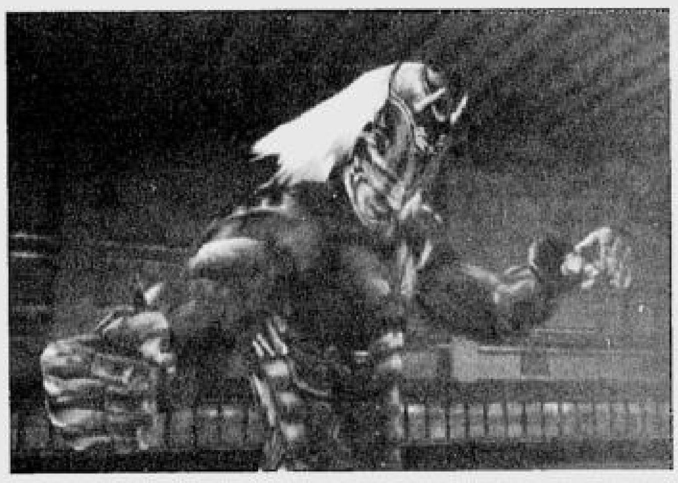
The company is currently downplaying the possibility that its software would eventually compete with Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system. However, SoftLabs indicated that Moses would undercut Microsoft's dominant position in the operating system market, as original equipment manufacturers and white box system builders would be able to build Linux boxes that are able to run Windows applications.

Over $30 billion are spent yearly on operating system software, and about 300 million operating system copies are shipped every year, SoftLabs said.

"SoftLabs aims to provide middleware products to alternative operating system (OS) manufacturers that allow them to provide customers with an OS capable of running existing Windows applications. By bundling Moses with the OS itself, Moses will end up sitting on an inordinately large number of desktops," the company added.

Flagellate thyself with Kakuto Chojin this Holy Week

From page B12



plates. This shows how Kakuto Chojin makes good use of the Xbox graphics processing unit. Instead of individually textured map surfaces, the fighter's "skin" acts like it's wrapped around a polygon skeleton. Shadows are also impressive in this dark game. Self-shadowing allows shadows to be cast on the fighter's limbs and onto the floor in photorealistic relation to the light and environment. However, some of the rings do not have dynamic shadowing and attempt to fool the untrained eye. Some of the criss-crossing shadows fall down on the floor but not on the fighters!

Sometimes, you can even see the fighter's breaths and the mist produced when their bodies hit the ground. But then again, what good are fleshy, realistic characters which are motion-captured perfectly if you don't get to enjoy what they do in the game? Kakuto Chojin's combat engine—the heart of any fighting game—does not match the graphics engine.

Another saving grace for Kakuto Chojin is the four-player free-for-all which is absent in most fighting games. Four-player games are usually limited to tag team battles. But in Kakuto Chojin, four players can choose to mix it up and fight till only one man is standing in Battle Royal mode or grab the crown in the four-player Capture the Crown mode where you literally try to wear a crown on the ground and be the last man to go down with the crown.

In single player mode, the AI is pretty lame unless you kick up the difficulty to "Extreme," the highest level. Probably the only difficult opponent is the last boss battle, where you square off with a hoofed and horned female virago named Daeva. Other than that, anyone who's ever played even the most basic of 2D fighting games can breeze through Kakuto Chojin.

Kakuto Chojin started off as a demo game for the graphics capabilities of the Xbox, and it looks like it never went beyond that. This game was rushed out of production with little thought or work added to the engine—another victim of the pursuit for eye candy instead of an overall good gaming experience. Pretty ironic since some of the members of Dream-Publishing's development team came from Dream Factory, an outfit partly responsible for SquareSoft's Tobal series and The Bouncer, both on the PS2.

So, if you want to see virtual fighters flagellating themselves or if you want to punish yourself this Holy Week, buy a copy of Kakuto Chojin. It would give you time to meditate and realize that some things of beauty are indeed just skin deep. It would also make you suffer like a fool this Holy Week for wasting your money on the game.

Hacked Xbox runs Linux sans mod chip

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

HACKERS have managed to run the Linux operating system on Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox gaming console without hardware modifications, according to an online Xbox hacking forum.

According to postings on xbox-scene.com and the xboxhacker.net, the hackers were able to run the free Linux operating system on an Xbox without soldering any modification or "mod" chip onto the console.

The hackers used a common exploit in a saved game from Electronic Arts' Xbox title "007: Agent Under Fire," one of the postings indicated.

The saved game causes a security problem called a buffer overflow, which in turn starts a compact version of Linux.

To do this, one needs an original copy of the James Bond game, and a memory card connected to a PC, according to the hackers. The hackers also suggested that one could build their own memory cards using a standard USB memory stick.

The Xbox has been designed to run only games that include security code digitally signed by Microsoft. However, a mod chip soldered onto the circuit board of the Xbox can enable it to run pirated games and allow it to accept other software aside from the Xbox operating system, which in turn is also based on Windows. Observers add, however, that the security hole found in the James Bond buffer overflow error would open up more holes that can be exploited on the Xbox.

Previously, hackers have been trying to pry open the gaming console in order to convert it into a powerful computer that runs on Linux. Mod chips are currently being used to bypass the security mechanism in the Xbox so that it could run unlicensed games.

Asia to lead in broadband growth: IDC

SINGAPORE—The Asia Pacific region outside of Japan will lead the world in terms of broadband subscribers this year as telecoms operators lower their toll charges and mobile users increase in number, an industry monitor said Wednesday.

In particular, developing markets in China and Taiwan are poised to see sharp growth in broadband subscribers, International Data Corp. (IDC) said in a report.

"Although the Korean market is reaching saturation in terms of subscriber base, other markets such as China and Taiwan are growing rapidly as more infrastructure is being made available to users, business and consumers alike," said Sandra Ng, regional vice president for communications.

The efforts of Asian governments to push their economies to be more technology-oriented are also having an impact on the growth in broadband subscribers, IDC pointed out.

"The positive correlation between broadband subscriber growth and proactive government policy is widely acknowledged," IDC said. "Many governments in the region have been pushing to develop their countries into knowledge-based economies and see broadband deployment and access as key catalysts."

However, pricing and the quality of infrastructure will still play a crucial role in the take-up of broadband access in the region, IDC said.

"The potential in user terms is substantial in these markets. The key drivers including the right mix of pricing and infrastructure deployment have to be correctly played out to maximize the potential," it said.

AFP

3Com future-proofs wi-fi installations with modular wireless LAN access points

AS the options to go wireless get even more complicated, end-users face more choices when it comes to standards by which they connect to the network without wires.

An example is the different flavors offered by the 802.11 standard, also known as wi-fi (wireless fidelity), a now-popular wireless standard for connecting to a network. The variants of wi-fi can confuse some people as far as implementation is concerned. There is an 802.11a, 802.11b and even 802.11g—they are all the same at the core yet offer different transmission speeds, offering consumers more choices yet may lead to more complications for some. 802.11a is the fastest of the three, followed by 802.11g which is now becoming popular in Japan. However, 802.11b is the most commonly used and can be found in wi-fi hotspots deployed in cafés.

3Com Corp. seeks to take the clutter away from these myriad of choices. 3Com recently announced a new line of modular wireless LAN access points and upgrade kits that offer customers the ability to easily bring the newer 802.11a wireless standard into their network while preserving their investment in existing wireless technology.

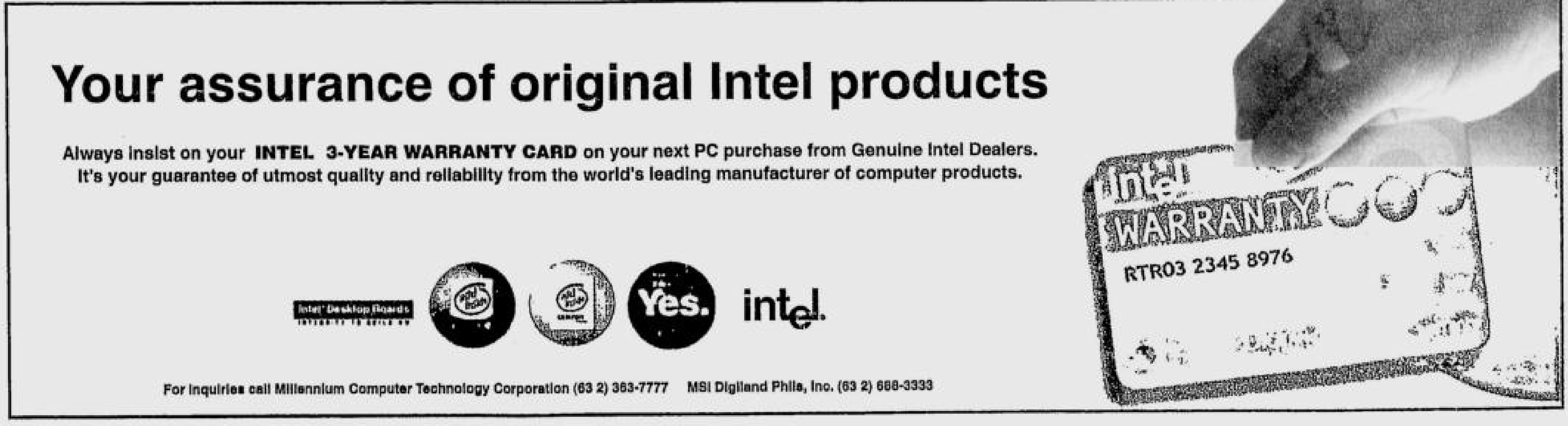
Businesses no longer have to choose one wireless networking flavor over the other. They can now implement and take advantage of both the widely available connectivity of 802.11b and 802.11a's higher transmission speeds and less crowded frequency while keeping costs down.

"3Com continues to drive innovations that offer practical solutions for customers," said John Yoon, senior director, wireless and security product management, 3Com Corp. "The modular design of our new wireless LAN access points are a perfect example: customers can now select the configuration of radios to best fit their organization while removing the need to purchase additional add-ons like power devices and antennas."

The new wireless products include the 3Com Wireless LAN Access Point 8200 with 802.11b radio; the 3Com Wireless LAN Access Point 8500 with 802.11a radio; and the 3Com Wireless LAN Access Point 8700 with 802.11a and 802.11b radios.

All three access points offer two configurable radio slots so that customers can upgrade or change the radio boards to accommodate new technology or better serve the existing radio needs of an organization.

The 3Com Wireless LAN Upgrade Kit is available in either 802.11b or 802.11a and comes with a radio board, an antenna board, and necessary accessories to allow the customer to easily install the upgrade into the access point.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Editor Leo Magno

Technology used in lieu of travel with SARS threat

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

THE SCARE and paranoia which the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) has created in Asia is forcing some technology companies to cut down travel to countries hit hard by the killer pneumonia virus.

The situation, however, highlights the role of information technology in terms of ensuring business continuity when there is a worldwide epidemic like SARS, according to Sun Microsystems Philippines president Cynthia Mamon.

Sun, for one, has been doing more regional teleconferences to announce new products and company strategies for 2003 in the recent weeks, the executive said.

Company executives are also spending more time communicating via e-mail to their regional headquarters in Singapore.

Such a scenario has, Mamon noted, indirectly forced employees to resort to technologies that would allow them to work remotely.

Microsoft Philippines marketing director Mark Yambot, for his part, said that the biggest software company in the world is encouraging subsidiaries in areas affected by SARS to have more flexible working hours.

Yambot said that as a precautionary measure, Microsoft employees were also advised not to travel to countries hit hard by SARS.

Microsoft has also rescheduled various events in Singapore, Vietnam, China and Hong Kong as another measure to prevent the likelihood of their people contracting the virus in the said countries.

Microprocessor manufacturer Intel also announced recently the cancellation of its major developer events in Beijing and Taiwan, where SARS cases are high.

Sun's Mamon admitted to local media that the company's employees have been advised not to travel to Singapore for regular executive meetings and other business-related activities in that country.

"We have quarterly management meetings in Singapore. That was cancelled," she said.

She added that Sun Microsystems has also cancelled several events in China with the SARS crisis.

"SARS has hurt business more than the war on Iraq," Mamon remarked, saying that SARS has put more pressure on technology companies already reeling from the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the ongoing war on Iraq.

Economists in Asia have said recently that SARS, they fear, might delay the expected growth of economies in the region this year.

Flagellate thyself with Kakuto Chojin this Holy Week

By Leo Magno

THIS being the Lenten season and all, and especially since some of you guys out there are planning to flagellate yourself or atone for your sins one way or another during Holy Week, I thought I'd review a game about suffering—suffering in the sense that the characters in the game beat each other to a pulp, and suffering in the sense that you'd rue the day you bought this particular game.

I'm talking about Kakuto Chojin, a fighting game developed by Dream-Publishing and published by Microsoft Game Studios.

Ironically, Microsoft—creator of the Xbox game console—has come up with a string of poor games for its own machine. There's Azurik and Nightcaster during the first generation, and Sneakers, Blinx: The Timesweeper and Kung Fu Chaos in the second generation. Even more ironic is the fact that some of the best Xbox games are not Microsoft-published.

In fairness, Microsoft Game Studios has come up with good games that went all the way to becoming certified hits. Let me see . . . there's Halo, then there's MechAssault. There's also Halo and MechAssault. And don't forget Halo and MechAssault.

But I digress. Let's talk about Kakuto Chojin and how it fits in Holy Week.

First of all, you've got 12 badass fighters whippin' each other's behinds across dark, underground-type arenas. However, the characters—which range from another Bruce Lee clone to a fat, homosexual Kung Fu academy reject—are bland and uninspired. Most of the characters are stereotypes. Reiji, the Bruce Lee clone, wears shades that look like they came straight from the '70s. J.D. Stone, the pit fighter, looks like Brad Pitt in the movie "The Fight Club."

We review this game on the XBox

Kakuto Chojin's fighters are all set for Holy Week as they dish out generic, repetitive moves in the Kakuto group. This spoils the game since you get tired of seeing the same old kicks and punches and seeing them all fall the same way. There is little technique to be mastered. A second set of moves called Chojin can be utilized once you beat story mode once. Which brings us to another flaw of the game.

Kakuto Chojin's story mode is a misnomer. There is no story at all! The whole thing is just so shallow with no depth at all. It looks like the developers merely placed story mode in there because other fighting games have it.

The fights take place in 12 dark, underground areas—many of which are nearly identical. Some of the rings like Sacrilege and The Underbelly are almost the same—there were just some palette changes and repositioning of elements. Surrounding the main ring is one huge static graphic image of the environment beyond. You can't pin fighters or damage them by throwing them at a wall, except for one or two rings which have edges on them, in which case you can kick or throw an opponent outside the ring for an instant KO. In fairness, though, two of the rings were really striking—namely Top of the World and the Hall of Fates. In Top of the World, raindrops fall on the rooftop, making the floor wet and acting as a mirror to reflect the neon lights of the surrounding buildings. Combine this with the movements of the fighters and the individual drops of rain and you're treated to a visual feast. In Hall of Fates, the reflection of the fighters while torch lights dance on the marble floor is amazing.

As in most Xbox games, the graphics are the most redeeming factor of Kakuto Chojin. Take a close look at J.D. Stone's hair and you'll see it's volumetric, making it look real. As the fighters move, their skin and clothing appear to morph over their skeletons rather than just move on top like armor

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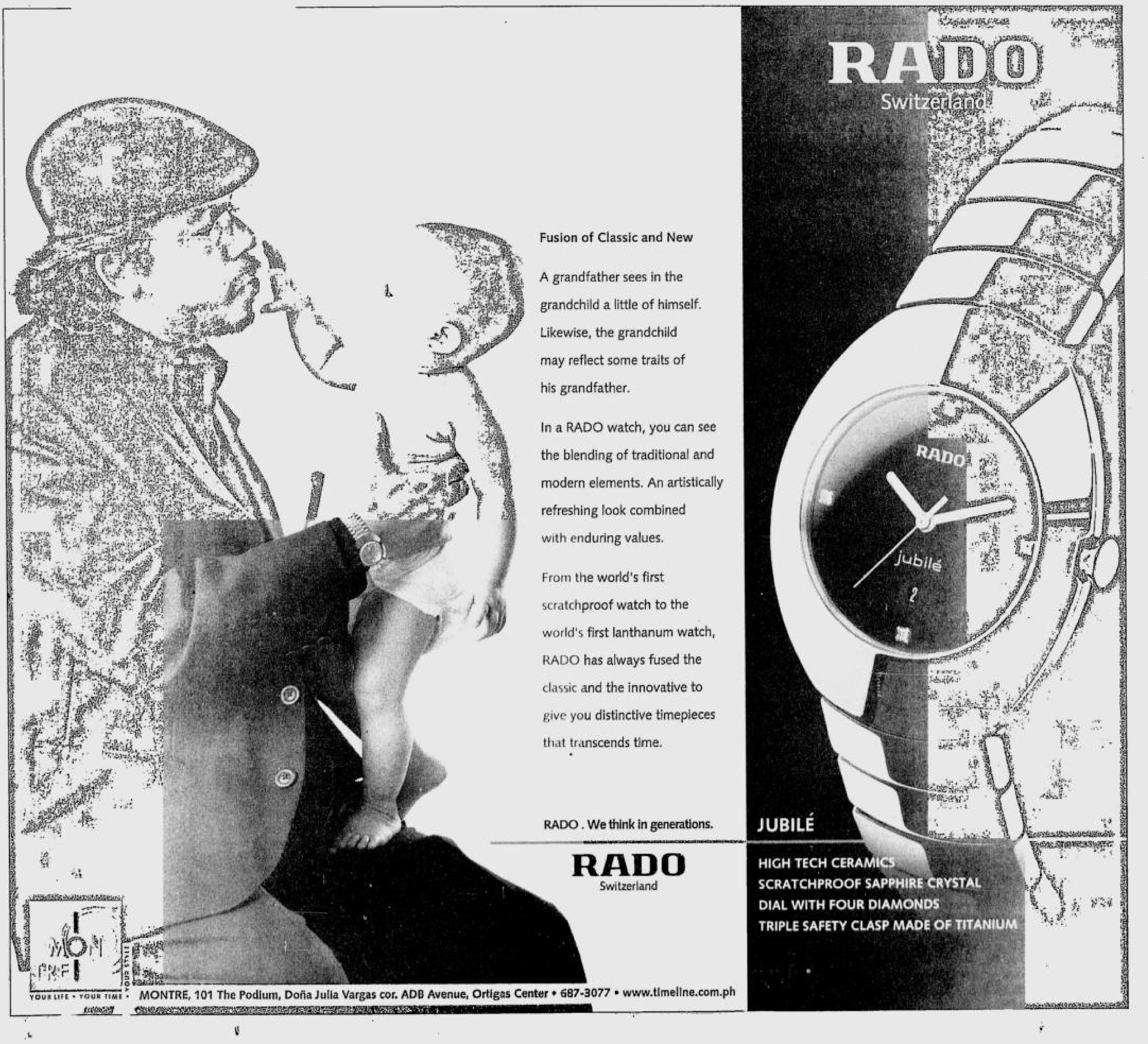

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What you never knew about this bee

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

WHEN my son was eight years old, we passed by the Jollibee Center in Ortigas and upon reading the sign he said, "That's were Tony Tan works 'no?" My husband and I were surprised and asked why he knows the Jollibee founder.

He said he read about Tony Tan Caktiong in his schoolbook. He is touted as one of the great modern day Filipinos along with Broadway actress Lea Salonga and prima ballerina Lisa Macuja.

A deserved recognition as Tony Tan's Jollibee is perhaps the most successful Filipino brand today. It has been around for 25 years and has already brought the Filipino burger abroad.

Country's No. 1

Its biggest claim to fame is probably the fact that it has made the Philippines the only country in the world where McDonald's is not number one.

When businessmen talk about Jollibee it's usually about what a great Filipino brand it is; or how it was able to beat the world's most popular burger chain; or how brilliant its founder is to have created such a brand.

The firm of course is much more than a brand. Over the past two and a half decades it has created a community of Jollibee alumni via its program of hiring students. It has developed its own unique systems and processes. It has also created and supported numerous micro entrepreneurs from among its suppliers.

Bee bits and pieces

The INQUIRER recently sat down with some of the top brass of Jollibee to talk about the brand and gather tidbits about the famous bee.

Stories abound like Jollibee executives constantly bumping into former crews of the chain who now occupy high positions in the corporate world.

That Jollibee continually reformulates its food offerings to adjust it to the changing tastes of consumers is not a very known fact.

Did you know for example that the taste and formulation of its burger has already evolved over the years?

"The changes are minor," points out Claro F. Certeza, VP for corporate affairs, but the aim is to cater to what customers want.

VP for corporate finance and chief finance officer Miguel Jose T. Navarrete shares an anecdote about the yum burger.

"We found out from our focus group discussions (FGDs) that the Filipino removes the pickles and the tomatoes from their burgers. It is a US perspective to include these."

"The research showed that the consumer didn't care for pickles and that it was just additional work to remove them."

CLARO F. Certeza, VP for corporate affairs.

VP for marketing Inez S. Reyes

Removing the pickles

Navarrete says it became an opportunity to re-engineer the burger so the pickles and tomatoes were removed and replaced by a pinkish special sauce.

The process of making hamburger patties has also evolved through the years.

CHIEF finance officer Miguel Jose T. Navarrete with Jollibee.

Hamburger patties used to be formed in the branches but as demand grew, Jollibee had to devise a more efficient system so they got patty machines, which improved efficiency.

When the chicken pops were introduced, according to VP for marketing Inez S. Reyes, its accompanying sauce was gravy. Customers, however, were asking for sweet and sour sauce so they immediately changed the sauce.

On the best selling Chickenjoy, Certeza cites that they have recently reformulated it to make it crunchier and juicier.

"A new process was introduced but the marinade remains the same," he says.

Jollibee also has an interesting network of franchise holders who have become the source of feedback from consumers; it has a group of first-tier customers who now go to Jollibee with their husbands, wives or children and have created another generation of yum burger and Chickenjoy eaters.

"Jollibee is still a young, dynamic brand. It is a Filipino brand that has stood the test of time," says Reyes.

Feedback

The food chain continually gets feedback about its products and makes the necessary adjustments. Its advantage over its main competitor is that it can immediately implement changes without having to ask permission from the head office and go through bureaucracy.

Other than feedback about the tastes, Jollibee also addresses feedback about the stores.

Reyes admits that in the past, feedback included questions about the cleanliness of the stores and its very simple facades.

Steps were taken to ensure that in-store cleanliness was given priority by the franchise holders and facades were reconstructed to make them fancier and more appealing.

Relevant and innovative

But how does one keep on building on a brand in such a fickle marketplace?

Reyes says by continually making the brand more relevant, being innovative while at the same time maintaining its core essence.

"Our core essence is the Filipino family and great tasting food," she says.

Certeza adds "*malasa na pagkain.*"

Filipino Taste

Observers note that the taste of the Jollibee burger is suited to the Filipino's preference for a tastier food. Americans usually prefer bland food.

Navarrete points out that McDonald's worldwide experienced its first loss in its history but Jollibee's system-wide revenues in-

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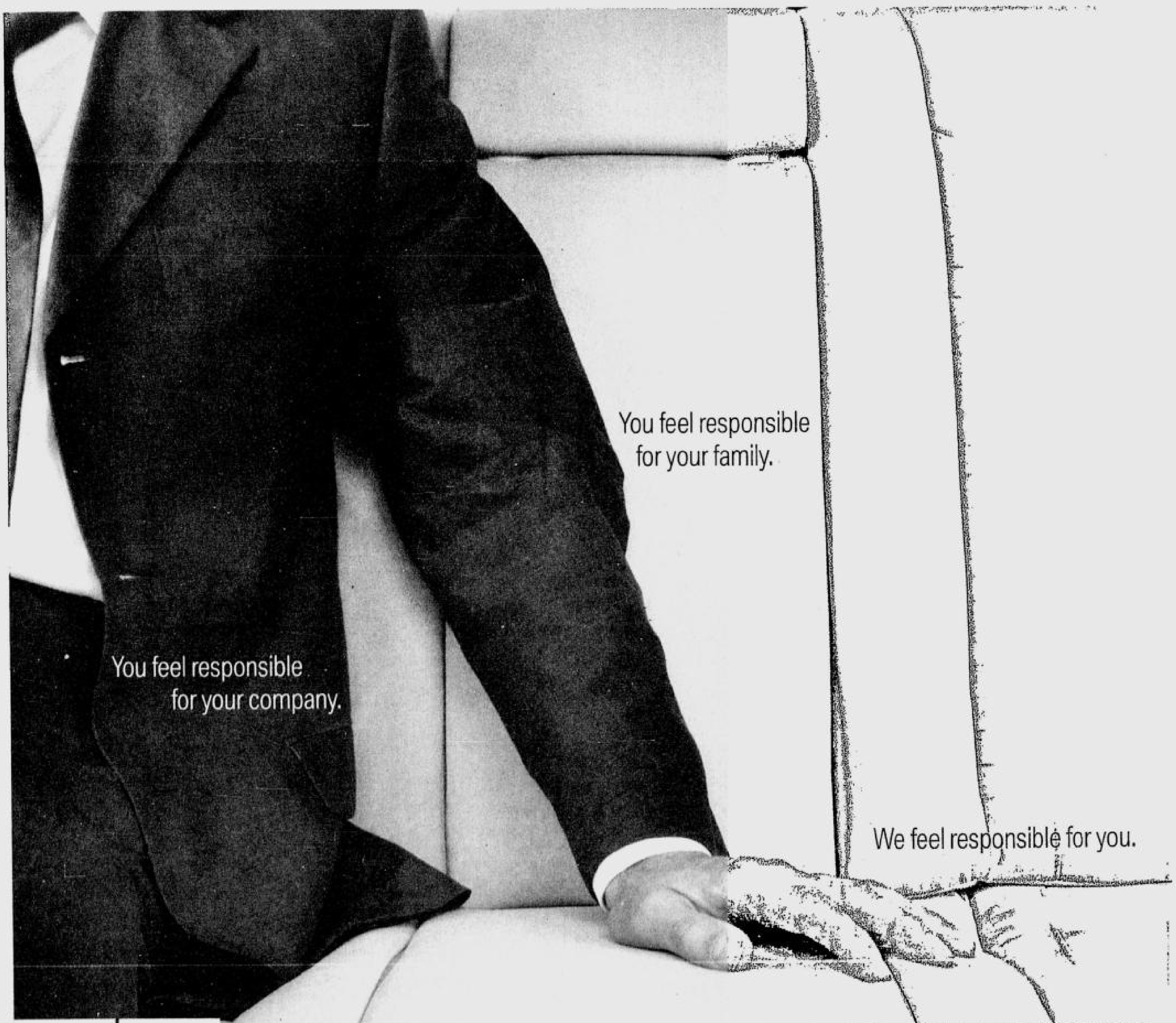
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Cooperative spirit brings progress to countryside

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao
and Cyrain G. Cabueñas
PDI Visayas Bureau

(First of two parts)

TACLOBAN CITY—Putting up a cooperative sounds simple enough. Get a group of people together, pool their funds or resources, lend out money to each other at an interest, collect payments then finally split part of the profits among the members at the end of the year.

What this formula does not show, however, are the serious problems that hound cooperatives, often leading to bankruptcy. These include the lack of management and financial controls, difficulty in collecting payments and also the inability to make wise investment decisions.

These problems partly explain why only a handful of the some 30,000 cooperatives that are registered with the government can be considered "successful" or financially viable.

Tragic situation

The situation is tragic considering that economic and political policymakers are one in saying that cooperatives have the best chance of helping people in the countryside get out of poverty.

Built on the principles of brotherhood, unity and self-help, cooperatives have often become the lone source of financial help for fishing and farming communities, except of course for loan sharks that bleed them dry.

The Land Bank of the Philippines, which was created precisely to help stimulate countryside growth by providing livelihood financing to small farmers, fishermen and peasant groups, recognizes this vast potential of cooperatives to aid in poverty alleviation efforts.

LBP, thus, has decided to step in and help build the capabilities of the leaders and the members of these cooperatives to give them a better chance of avoiding problems and maximizing their gains.

The decision has reaped dividends as many small and large cooperatives across the Philippines were strengthened and are now firmly on the path to success.

The INQUIRER recently visited three such cooperatives in Samar and Leyte that have benefited from the LBP's assistance program and have become models of how cooperatives should be run.

LBP's help came not only in the form of cash, but more importantly, in the form of training programs to help these cooperatives eventually meet their ultimate goal, which is to help improve the lives of their members.

ESSC-Remco

Theirs is a noble profession. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most low-paying jobs. Small wonder then that some teachers resort to selling ice candies and other goodies, at times even intimate apparel to make both ends meet.

Yet there are still others who seem to have forged an endless pact with loan sharks.

DANILO Alura (center) in front of ESSC-Remco's grocery store beside co-op members

Touched by this plight, Danilo Alura, Edmundo Campoto and other like-minded colleagues founded the Research and Extension Multipurpose Cooperative at the Eastern Samar State College Campus in 1994.

It was a tough sell to get members at first as the administration and other faculty members did not buy the idea easily.

The administration claimed the cooperative has limited services mostly benefiting the research and extension personnel only. Moreover, the faculty members had tried to join, with disastrous results, other cooperatives before Remco.

"No investment was returned. The board of directors would either declare bankruptcy or give White Rabbit candies as dividends," Campoto recalls. Remco started with a measly sum of P27,000 from the pooled contributions of some 18 teachers.

With Alura at the helm, the coop was accredited by the Cooperative Development Authority.

The board then devised a lending program that enabled members to borrow money equivalent to their take-home pay, which was payable through salary deduction.

It did not take long before many members were finally freed from the clutches of loan sharks. But then the problem of missed payments reared its ugly head.

"We had a problem with the collection because the co-op was always the last priority on the payroll. Because of this, we came up with the policy to only lend to those who can pay," Alura says.

Remco's membership more than doubled in just over a year as many skeptics were won over by the slow but sure growth of the cooperative's resources. Campoto took over as chairman of the board from 1995 to 1999 when Alura went abroad on study leave.

Challenges

Campoto successfully steered Remco through various challenges so much so that the co-op gained the confidence not only of the administration and other faculty members but of the LBP as well.

With its resources bolstered by LBP's P2-million loan given in 1998, ESSC-Remco expanded its operations from just lending to members to the operation of a canteen and even a photocopying machine.

After two terms, Campoto gave his seat to Felix Afable who expanded Remco's operations further to include a quasi-banking system.

Through the member-savings operations, members can now avail themselves of over-the-counter loans and other emergency transactions. It lures depositors by giving a higher interest rate on savings accounts than any commercial bank.

LBP helped train the in-house staff on bookkeeping and accounting practices to monitor the operation. The bank also audits the financial statements every six months to make sure that its operations are aboveboard and sustainable.

In 2001, fresh from his studies abroad, Alura was again elected chair of the board. He implemented safety nets like creating an auditing committee and ensuring loan payments through the co-maker system.

Over the years, Remco through LBP has evolved from a small enterprise into an establishment to contend with. Its capital has grown significantly from P27,000 to P2.773 million as of the end of last year and membership has grown to 206 members from 18.

Its financial stability can now be gauged through indicators such as portfolio quality, efficiency, stability, operation and sustainability or Pesos.

This year, it plans to build market stalls inside the campus to benefit both local vendors and students. The booths will be affordable and the profit will again go back to the members in the form of dividends to be split up at the end of the year.

Profiting the most from the cooperative are the teacher-members. With their single-minded efforts to grow their cooperative, many of these unsung heroes no longer have to think about selling ice candy to make ends meet nor will they get White Rabbit candies as dividends. *(To be continued)*

Managing in a wired market

E-COMMERCE in the Philippines is not as widespread as it is in the United States. This is why local companies that want to expand in that direction almost always need to hire a foreign consultant. But in order to catch up with the fast-paced world of e-commerce, the Philippines needs to develop its own pool of local talent.

This is the challenge being addressed by iAcademy, the Philippine partner of Carnegie Mellon University, the world's No. 1 IT university. iAcademy recently introduced a new course under its Business Management program called BS Business Management major in eManagement (BSBM-EM) which integrates iAcademy's business management course with Carnegie's IT program.

Peter K. Fernandez, dean of the Business Management program, says by channeling the flow of IT education toward e-commerce, iAcademy prepares Filipino students to take on this competitive IT industry and puts them at par with their foreign counterparts .

Fernandez explains the need to come up with a new program that addresses the changes in the way people do business: "With the advent of e-commerce, the changes being implemented in business are very heavy on technology. Expertise in business management alone is not enough."

At the same time, he says, there are IT graduates who are hired for business management positions but who do not fill them very well because of poor communication skills.

"In theory, the best systems analysts are not IT graduates but business management graduates. But in reality, systems analysts are IT graduates. The systems produced by these analysts are not good because IT people are not trained well for business," he explains.

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Broad-based growth through cooperatives

(Second of a series)

MAPping THE FUTURE

Antonio T. Hernandez

COOPERATIVES, as everybody now know, are viewed worldwide as the most effective grassroots self-help organization capable of unifying the diffused individual power of small producers and consumers.

They serve as an economic counter-force to fortify grass-root bargaining power; as means to broaden ownership of productive enterprises; as a mechanism to pool the resources they have in order to meet mutual needs; as a forum to promote savings and capital formation; as well as facilitate equitable distribution of wealth and profits.

In a country like the Philippines, where the population is high relative to land area; where poverty alleviation is still the hallmark of the national development plan; where the bulk of the economic resource is still in the hands of a few; and where business runs under a trader-controlled economy—the bonding of the disadvantaged majority into self-help organizations like the cooperatives is a strategic imperative.

Development strategy

This development strategy took a progressive turn in the mid-90s when Land Bank—dead set in tapping an economical, participative and integrative way of reaching out to the agrarian beneficiaries—decided to intensify the harnessing of these self-help groups as partners in carrying out a wholesale approach toward a timely delivery of financial services. Clearly a method which avoids the inefficiencies and high cost of individual lending.

The path to this cooperative-Land Bank tie-up was not easy though, given the state of the cooperative sector then.

Review of the sector, specially the agricultural cooperatives, tells us of constraining gaps to contend with, namely:

- Membership development and expansion.
- Business operations and profitability.
- Savings promotion and capital build-up.
- Bookkeeping and financial transparency.
- Leadership and management of growth.

Weaknesses in these five broad areas of concern are not totally traceable to the cooperators themselves. They were to a material extent precipitated by government spoon-feeding programs thought to be benevolent but ended up counterproductive.

Co-op failures

Take the case of the externally initiated pre-cooperative units (Samahang Nayon) and the concessional Masagana 99 tandem which haunts rural development up to now. Organized and implemented on a supply-led premise, they eliminated each other, but not before distorting the values of people toward credit and derailing the rural banking system.

On the other hand, the internally initiated, savings-driven community-based cooperatives and their urban counterpart i.e., the credit unions, took a more healthy turn.

High personal discipline

Growing at their own pace, and riding on a strong capital base generated from savings of members with high personal discipline, they stood their ground unshaken to this day—obviously the leading segment of the sector.

Experts in the agricultural development circuit are one in pointing out the culprit in this sorry state of rural finance namely, the traditional thinking that: the poor cannot save; hence, the lack of emphasis on savings and the tolerance toward dole outs; subsidized credit is primary concern; hence, the hostility to the formal banking system and the non-sustainability of programs due to the absence of cost recovery; and emphasis on projects ahead of people; hence, the lack of preparedness of borrowers to handle projects.

Market-oriented policy

However, the advocacy shift toward a demand-driven, market-oriented policy ushered in by the National Credit Council which emphasized timeliness of inputs (financial and technical) in terms of availability and better access rather than subsidies; and competitiveness of output (products and services) in terms of quality and reliability rather than sheer production, has brought a reversal to the traditional thinking in Philippine rural finance. *(To be continued)*

(Antonio T. Hernandez is a senior vice president of the Land Bank of the Philippines. The MAP secretariat and the author may be reached via mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

What you never knew about this bee

From page C1

creased three times to a record P26.8 billion in 2002.

As part of its continuous innovation, Reyes says Jollibee has been offering a new promo every week to celebrate its silver anniversary.

An earlier innovation undertaken was its patties. At the start, the burgers used to be delivered pre-mixed to the stores and the patties were formed in the branches.

As demand grew however they had to devise a more efficient system so they got patty machines which improved efficiency.

But what has really been sustaining Jollibee all these years is the growing population of the Philippines.

Their surveys show the bulk of their customers are families.

Reyes, the fourth marketing manager of Jollibee, says she sees her role as very challenging.

Social conscience

Like most corporations its size, Jollibee has also involved itself in socio-civic activities.

It has been very active in the Habitat for Humanity where Certeza says they have built more than 60 homes for the poor totaling P7 million.

They also have a supplemental feeding program for 0- to 6-year-old children—a project with the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

They also plan to employ specially abled people in 300 stores. In particular those who cannot speak nor hear.

Jollibee has 434 stores, 190 of which are company owned and the balance are held by franchisees.

MOVEMENTS

CIS has new president

CORPORATE Information Solutions (CIS) recently announced the appointment of Yolanda Arbi as president. Arbi's immediate priority is aligning the organization to face the current challenges of an increasingly competitive information and communications technology (ICT) industry and a difficult global economy.

A former CIS officer, Arbi rejoins the group after her recent stint at Getronics Philippines, an Amsterdam, Netherlands-based global ICT company that has enjoyed a local presence since 1985 as Olivetti ISC and Wang Global.

Prior to that, she was division manager/group head in various capacities for Fujits Philippines. She has 26 years of experience in ICT software and data center services.

East West Bank has new retail credit head

EAST West Banking Corp. (EWBC), one of the country's fastest growing banks, announced recently the appointment of Alex G. Ilagan as senior vice president to head the retail credit business of the bank.

Ilagan will be tasked to handle the consumer loans business segment of the bank. His appointment comes in line with the bank's renewed thrust to expand its consumer business, particularly in the area of housing loans.

The new EWBC executive brings to the bank his expertise as a veteran consumer credit executive in the financial circuit, with years of experience in handling the credit card business, having worked with various multinational companies like Procter & Gamble and Pepsi Cola.

Ilagan graduated with a B.A. Economics degree at the De La Salle University.

TFE appoints new VP

TOTALFINAELF Philippines Corp. (TFE Philippines), a subsidiary of Paris-based multinational oil and gas company TotalFinaElf, has appointed Raymond S. Royales as the new vice president for consumer sales division.

Previously assigned as TFE Philippines' district manager for Visayas and Mindanao and for special projects, Royales handled new business opportunities in the said areas. He brings with him nine years of experience in the oil industry where he was among TFE Philippines' first six consumer sales engineers tasked to gain new accounts in the country.

He replaced Arsenio "Arsenic" Villanueva who was promoted to a more senior position within the TotalFinaElf Holding Co. based in Philadelphia, USA. Villanueva is the first Filipino to be expatriated by the TotalFinaElf Group.

Royales completed his degree in Business Administration and Accountancy at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

PNB in Partnership with Global Leaders

Launching Ceremony
PNB
Philippine National Bank HK- Citibank HK
MERCHANT COLLECTION SERVICE
Februar 7, 2003
citibank

PNB President & CEO Lorenzo V. Tan (left) and Citigroup Hong Kong Country Officer T. C. Chan

PNB Remittance Service Plus

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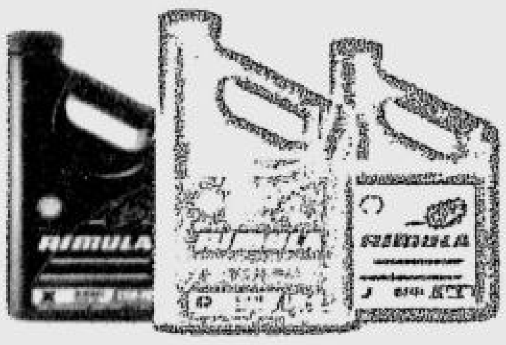

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Best for:

RUY Y. Moreno, RCBC VP and executive assistant to the chair; Walter Ambrogi, chief executive, Greater China & Korea, IntesaBci S.P.A.-Hong Kong Br.; J.C. Parreñas, senior advisor to the chair of Chinatrust.

ALFONSO Yuchengco of RCBC is welcomed by incoming CEO of Nestle Phils. Inc., Salvador Picem; and its outgoing CEO Juan B. Santos

SALLY Navarro, Cesar E.A. Virata, vice chairman & acting CEO of RCBC and president, Bankers Association of the Philippines

MOONYEEN Singson; Susanne Y. Santos, RCBC director and Amaryllis Salazar

Ambassador fetes Asia-Pacific's biggest group of top bankers

AMBASSADOR Alfonso T. Yuchengco recently tendered a dinner for the delegates of the Asian Bankers Association Planning Committee with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as guest of honor.

ABA is the largest and most active regional organization of banks in the Asia-Pacific region with a membership of some 120 leading banks in the region as members.

In the Philippines, ABA members include Allied Banking Corp., Development Bank of the Philippines, Equitable-PCIBank, Metrobank, Philippine National Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and Security Bank.

The association recently announced its support for the development of securitization and credit guarantee markets in Asia. The position paper of ABA was in response to a call by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation for private sector views on the said issue.

According to Rizalino S. Navarro, chair of the ABA Policy Advocacy Committee and RCBC, the growth of securitization will promote development of bond markets in Asia.

However, financial markets are not developed enough to channel savings in Asia worth about $1.3 billion of official reserves directly to Asian borrowers. Instead, they are usually invested first in the US and in European markets before being recycled back to Asia.

Navarro also said that ABA believes securitization can help small and medium enterprises obtain financing, allowing smaller bond issues of many companies to be bundled together into larger ones with higher credit ratings, greater liquidity and lower costs.

RCBC COO Valentin Araneta with wife.

STEFAN Hohl, senior economist, Bank for International Settlements (BIS); and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

PRESIDENT Macapagal shakes hands with Hah Song Wang, advisor to the Taiwan's Minister of Finance.

MONETARY Board member Antonino Alindogan with wife Amaryllis.

PHOTOS BY MANDY NAVASERO AND JOHNNY VILLENA

ABA Advisory Council member Peter B. Favila, member, ABA chair Ambassador Alfonso T. Yuchengco, an ABA Policy Advocacy Commitee chair.

GABRIEL Singson, ABA board advisor

RJ dela Cuesta, CAPCCI deputy director-general

THOMAS K.S. Chen, of Chinatrust

SINGER Noli Cabahug

MONETARY Board member Melito Salazar with wife.

Novelty shirts give Batangueños sense of identity

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BATANGAS CITY—As former vice president for operations of LBC, Jun Latay's job involved frequent travels around the country.

He noticed then that most provinces have one thing in common that Batangas doesn't have: a novelty T-shirt that Batangueños can wear anywhere with pride.

"I noticed that novelty T-shirts in every region I've been to really sells not only to tourists but also to locals who are proud to show who they are and where they're from," Latay says.

He adds that he also noticed that although Batangueños have their atypical Tagalog, they didn't have novelty items they could call their own.

Hobby turned business

In 1992, he and his wife, Tess, started printing 50 pieces of T-shirts with Batangueño phrases in their house in Brgy. Granha, this city.

The couple used the silkscreen process that Latay learned in De La Salle University in Lipa as a vocational subject in high school.

It was Tess who wrote the text printed on the T-shirt they bought from Divisoria.

"The decision on the name Ala-eh Shirt was Tess'. We believe that our T-shirts will be bought not because of the design, but for the concept that our clients would take pride in being a Batangueño," Latay explains.

A consignee who had a stall in the city's public market agreed to sell their T-shirts.

After seven days, their consignee came back to ask for more Ala-Eh shirts as the 50 pieces were already sold in one week.

The couple then decided to print more shirts during weekends as they still have their regular jobs during the weekdays.

Batangas Nobeltis

"As the demand grew in two months' time, our consignee started to pressure us to produce more. Tess and I noticed that the hobby we started was no longer just a hobby," Latay says.

Since Latay saw the potential of the business, he resigned from his job in LBC in 1993 and put up a printing shop next to his home.

The couple put up the Diwang Laya Textile Printing that year, with Ala-eh shirt as their first product.

He was the first Lipeño to professionalize the T-shirt printing business. Back then the business in the city was just a backyard industry.

"I hired the workers and artists who used to work in the backyard printshops," Latay recalls." That way, I was able help them by giving them jobs while retaining the craft they love to do."

They also stopped buying their T-shirts from Divisoria. To cut down on costs, they sewed the shirts.

Latay also put up their first store in the city, which he named Batangas Nobeltis.

The store was followed by another in the Caedo Commercial Complex in Batangas City and another one in Tanauan City.

That time, he still maintained his growing number of consignees and dealers.

Ala-eh concept

"For the first time, the Batangueños had something they can wear and show off, a shirt that can tell the world who they are, that they are Batangueños through and through, and they are proud of it," Latay says.

Graphic designs then followed the messages in full and screaming colors.

"We also launched participative designs as part of our promotions. We accepted designs suggested by our clients. The winning designs were printed on our T-shirts, and the design contributor gets a free shirt," he adds.

Batangas words used on the shirts range from the most ridiculous to the most gross.

Batangas speak

Tirog, which means sexually aroused, goes on print as Tirog na Tirog.

Another message on the shirt likens life to a *kitse* (bottle cap) with *"Ang buhay ng tao ay parang kitse, minsa'y unat, minsa'y pingkot, minsa'y tinghar, minsa'y taob"* (Life is like a bottle cap, sometimes stretched, sometimes deformed, sometimes spread, sometimes facing the ground).

Latay also applied social relevance in the messages printed on the shirts.

When Onyok Velazco lost in the Los Angeles Olympics and the Filipinos suspected foul, his shirts put out the message *"Nadaya kami"* above the L.A. Olympics logo.

Even before former President Joseph Estrada's impeachment trial, Ala-Eh shirt has been coming out with Eraption antics in Batangas language.

Tourism also got its boost with the message *"Kung gusto mo'y alwan sa buhay, sa Batangas ika'y suminsay"* (If you want an easy life, visit Batangas).

Social commentaries

To protest the US-led war against Iraq, one of the new shirt designs had the words "*Sawa na ako sa gulo, sa kapayapaan naman tayo* (I'm already tired of trouble, let's have peace)" written around a drawing of the globe.

Another anti-terrorist design goes "Terrorist no entry! Peaceful *kami dine sa Ala-Eh* country! (We're peaceful here in Ala-Eh country)."

When his first daughter was born two years ago, he started designing children's clothes with Batangas rhymes and graphics suited for children.

"We see to it that our messages, be they purely Batangueño or not, have social relevance," Latay says. "That way, we'll never be left out of the latest trend."

The concept of putting Batangueño words, which not all Tagalog-speaking Filipinos understand, was a hit, especially to the Batangueños who live and work abroad.

His wife Tess used to be their censor, but now, nobody censors the messages.

"That's because we refine the messages ourselves. The goal was to have religious, intelligent, cute, sarcastic, ridiculous, and gross messages presented with class and style," Latay says.

Fight for Ala-eh

Although Latay has proven that he was successful in the novelty business, he confessed that he could have been more successful if he was protected by the Department of Trade and Industry's trademark office.

Although Latay has already applied for a trademark certificate at the DTI main office in Makati city which took him two years to get, an imitator allegedly robbed him of his copyright.

"In 1995, a businessman from Lipa city claimed to be the first to come up with the Ala-Eh shirt. He even had the guts to get the copyrights office and got a sworn statement and copyright certificate claiming that he owns Ala-Eh Shirt," Latay says.

Latay was a victim of the DTI's non-synchronized copyright and trademark processing. Back then, the trademark office and copyright office worked separately.

"For a year, that imitator harassed me, claiming that Ala-Eh shirt was his. He even circulated leaflets and advertised on newspapers that he owned my business," Latay says. He also went to the National Bureau of Investigation and ordered its officers to raid his shop, he says.

Intellectual rights

Fortunately, the NBI officials, most of them lawyers, knew about intellectual property rights and demanded the imitator to produce a copy of his trademark certificate.

"I have the trademark certificate, not that imitator. So the NBI summoned me and when they saw the trademark certificate with my name on it, they declared Ala-Eh shirt as mine. They also advised me to file an infringement case against that imitator," Latay says.

Latay filed the infringement case in 1998 which was settled out of court in 2000.

"One thing I learned from that experience is that no one can let a good man down," Latay says. "I fought for what I believed in and what was really mine."

The problem was, when the case closed and he was ready to expand farther, the Asian economy was going downhill.

Management by example

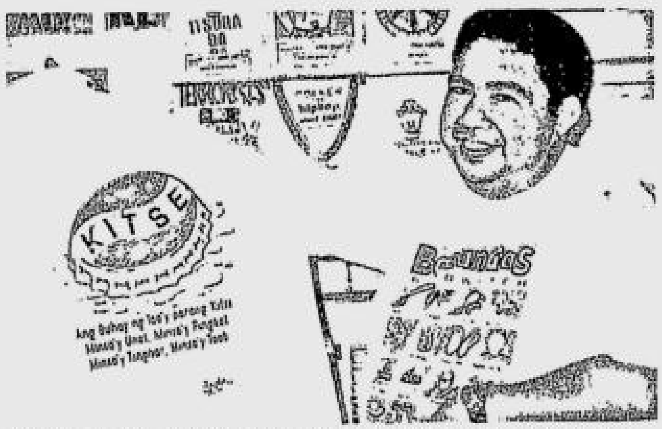
Like all courageous Batangueños, Latay didn't give up the fight for his business nor let the copyright problem affect his business.

With a growing number of dealers here and abroad, Latay says he wants to have a branch of Ala-Eh Nobeltis store in Manila.

NYU ARAYBALS
OLTAYM PEYBORITS
BATANGAS
AGBANA
A BATANGA
ITSURA BA GA AI
Yac Na!

DINE la-ang. (Only here) In front of the novelty store screams a board full of Ala-eh shirts.

PHOTOS BY MEI MAGSINO/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU


KITSE
Ang buhay ng tao'y parang kitse
Minsa'y Unat, Minsa'y Pingkot
Minsa'y Tinghar, Minsa'y Taob

LIFE likened to a kitse (bottlecap). This design is one of the store's bestsellers.

Right strategy, passion can beat a giant's cash flow

TO compete against the market leaders doesn't mean a Filipino-owned business has to match the cash outflow of the rival giants.

All it takes is guts, the right strategy and the endless passion for new challenges.

Filipino entrepreneurs can take their cue from RFM, the food firm, Corporation as President and CEO Joey Concepcion shared some of his trade secrets in the recent Business Leadership Forum organized by the Ateneo de Manila University John Gokongwei School of Management at the InterContinental Manila last March 26.

From a small flour-milling company in 1958, RFM grew into one of the country's consistent Top 100 Corporations in Asia.

With the energy and skills he admittedly inherited from his grandfather Don Salvador Araneta, the third generation Joey cached on his passion for new challenges to transform RFM from a commodity business to a multi-brand corporation.

"What excites me is challenging the leaders. What excites me is brand building. That's why my vision then was to change our business model from being a commodity company into a branded food and beverage company," said Concepcion.

CONCEPCION

Believe it or not, this La Salle graduate actually started 20 years ago as RFM's salesman for Luzon who just wanted to prove that he could add more value to the company. But his humble beginnings equipped him with the wisdom and the experience he need to fulfill his destiny—as he further admits most of his learning came from the field where he got the pulse of what the consumer market really wanted.

Reinventing RFM

RFM's success didn't happen overnight. With San Miguel dominating the market and the uncertainties of the Philippine economy then, nobody wanted to put money in the company then. Joey thought of determining what RFM's business model was, relying in the company's cash cow—the flour operation—for the needed investment.

Though struggling to convince family members to change the business model, Joey made the bold move to direct investments to go into brand building.

His first acquisition was to buy the brand called Selecta—a small-based product owned by the Arce Family and available in only 20 supermarkets.

Magnolia at that time controlled 95 percent of the ice cream market and many thought Joey's move was a crazy strategy and a big gamble.

But the young but sharp-minded Joey saw the opportunity others couldn't see. That time, the quality of Magnolia was very bad and the company was having problems with the management and other things.

He decided to relocate the Arce's facilities to their own plant, and his equally sharp marketing whiz brother, John, helped put a team composed of veterans from Magnolia. Together, they thought of coming out with new exciting flavors and Selecta fast became a fantastic hit.

Selecta broke Magnolia's market monopoly.

"The problem with leaders who have been lording over the market for long is, they tend to be lax. And this could turn into a big window of opportunity for small- and medium-based businesses," explained Concepcion.

"The success of Selecta was way beyond our expectation. The advertising, the marketing ... the whole thing actually was of the right quality at the right time. It's a matter of being aware of the right opportunity," he added.

Right timing it is, and after Selecta, Joey found another brand and a company called Cosmos. Looking back, Concepcion considers it "the most daring feat" as it really took a lot of guts even thinking of challenging Coca-Cola.

But victory was already at hand for RFM when San Miguel sold Coca-Cola to an Australian company Amatil. The cliché "Mag-Sarsi Ka Para Maiba" and "Pop Cola—Tama ang Timpla" caught like fire among Filipinos.

"You will have a hard time competing against a local if you're managing a business from overseas. At that time, the Australians running Amatil didn't know what was happening here and they just kept increasing the price of Coke. That opened doors for the entry of Sarsi and Pop Cola in the mass-based market," Concepcion related.

"The softdrink market is a P40 billion industry. The pricing strategy of Pop Cola worked, and it allowed Filipino consumers to try and see that there was no significant difference between Pop and Coke. So we built distribution capacity all over the Philippines and embarked on a very aggressive marketing program. Thus, we came out with another winning brand."

"Pop Cola emerged a big threat. When San Miguel regained Coca Cola, acquiring Pop Cola from RFM for whopping price of P14 billion was the best thing to do," he added.

Protecting families of overseas workers

From page C8

There is a way to raise the pay of some while reducing their number of days abroad. The government can certify the best workers in their respective fields. They are on the honor roll. This seal of quality can help them negotiate for higher salaries and longer leaves.

For example, a construction company in Qatar wouldn't want to lose its star engineers. The Doha executives may pay a premium for their salaries and allow them more time back home.

Another means is to promote more OFW trips to the Philippines by reducing airfares. The state may make special deals with the various airlines. The government arranges for bulk-buying of special flights for OFWs, taking advantage of wholesale rates.

Recall that airlines do provide more attractive rates for bulk ticket sales. The savings will be more pronounced for trips during off-peak seasons.

A variation of this is to take advantage of bonus trips. Airlines give away bonus seats to the agents who recruit a large block of paying passengers. The state can play the role of wholesale agent, collect bonus tickets and raffle them off.

Internet skill

The government should also require departing OFWs to master the Internet.

I was in a Net café one weekend and noticed a father with his eight-year old daughter seated beside me. Their computer had a special video camera attached to the monitor. They were on "chat" mode with the mother who was in Hong Kong. "Mommy, Mommy," squealed the girl.

The mother was on the screen live, waving at the two and she could see the image of the father and daughter from her station. The family clearly made an appointment to be on the Internet at a specific date and time. And all for a minimum charge in the Net café.

Thanks to video and telecommunications, they could communicate visually on their weekend date.

High technology does wonders to help people keep in touch. Before they leave for other countries, Filipino workers should be adept at using email, surfing, egroups, community websites, electronic chat and how to access Net video. And that's on top of cellphone texting with global roaming, a Filipino area of expertise.

Business training

OFWs should also be encouraged to put up their own small businesses here. Through their migrant work, they have saved a little nest egg. That money will earn the highest returns in business. Profits from the enterprise may be sufficiently high to keep them in the Philippines.

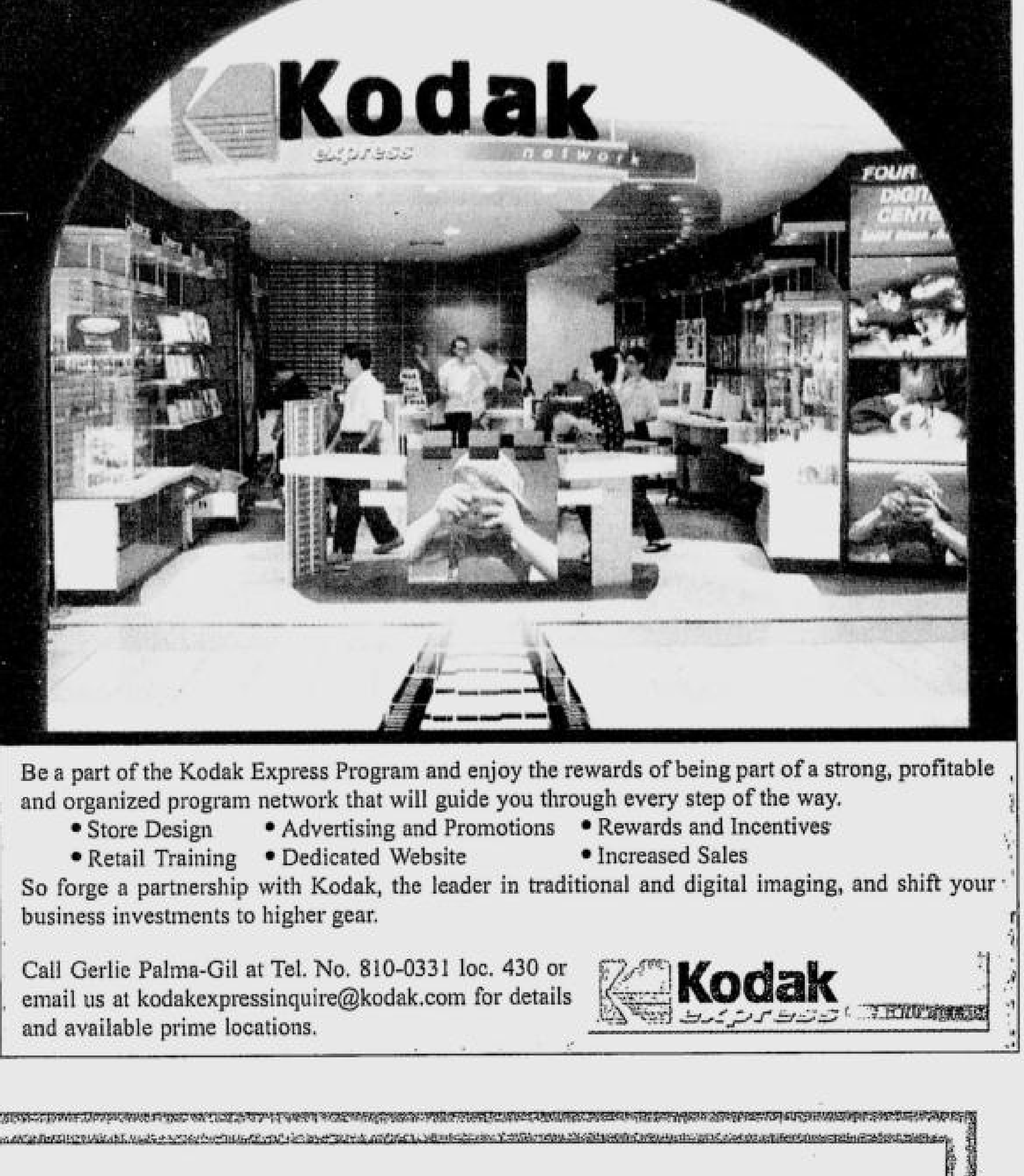
Besides, business does fit the mindset of the OFW. They won't settle for mediocre money after getting used to high pay. They are driven by hard work. They want comfortable living standards for their families. They are risk-takers. They are mobile and flexible in their outlook. And they are pushed by habits of world-class excellence.

Businesses set up by OFWs are nothing new, of course. Many a jeepney bears the proud inscription, "Katas ng Saudi." But plain intuition is not enough; they need professional guidance.

They need to master marketing, financial statements and the registration mill. They need to know how to export. The government should arrange for business training for returning workers. An entrepreneurial heart is not the same as an entrepreneurial mind.

Business outsourcing, certification, and the bulk buying of trips. Internet mastery, video technology and business training. These should ease the strain on OFW families as they pursue jobs across the planet. *Comments to darroyo@philonline.com*

BUSINESS ON
THE EXPRESS LANE



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OFWs huge source of capital for local businesses

MORE than ever, today's overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are emerging as the country's economic savior, with their pooled resources amounting to over $8 billion (P40 billion) as a potential source of unborrowed capital for local businesses.

"Harnessing this huge dollar income for productive enterprise is the key to widening the country's entrepreneurial and domestic capital base, which can enormously raise national productivity and protect us all from external financial shocks," said Eduardo del Rosario, chair of the Overseas Filipinos WorldNet (OFWNet) Foundation Inc.

OFWNet is a private, non-stock, non-profit organization formed by more than 1,000 migrant Filipino leaders worldwide to serve the needs of OFWs and their families, protect their interests, and pursue their socioeconomic and political welfare individually and collectively.

"In pursuit of that goal, the OFWNet has created the OFW International Holdings as the umbrella corporation of the various businesses that will be spawned by pooling the resources of migrant Filipinos and empowering them economically and financially to be reintegrated successfully and productively into the mainstream of Philippine society," Del Rosario added.

A big step in that direction is the staging of the Overseas Filipinos Worldwide Conference and Trade Exhibit from May 23 to 25 at the SM Megatrade Hall 3 in Mandaluyong City, Philippines.

Organized by OFWNet, the three-day event will serve as a forum for overseas Filipinos, their families and colleagues to discuss the best possible means for the reintegration process.

These include socioeconomic issues, government policy directions, and business development prospects for OFWs.

On the other hand, the trade exhibit will offer various investment opportunities and trade matching activities between OFWs and various business entities, including the franchising industry.

This process will help the OFWs find the most lucrative enterprise for their investments, which can provide them not only with secondary income but also financial security after their employment abroad.

"In fact, these activities can give rise to new SMEs (small and medium enterprises) that will be owned and operated by OFWs," said Norman Ray Gacula, executive vice president and chief operating officer of OFW International Holdings.

The OFW Conference and Trade Exhibit is sponsored by Insular Life Assurance Co. Ltd., the Philippine Daily Inquirer, and INQ7.net.

For booth reservation and conference registration, call 896-0639/37, 899-6893, fax 896-0637, 890-2101, e-mail fiera@info.com.ph, or visit www.fmi.com.ph.

With some 8 million OFWs worldwide and an average number of five family members each, their total household population conservatively placed at 40 million also offers a huge market for various products and services.

The OFWs' remittances of over $8 billion annually account for at least half of the country's monthly average dollar or gross international reserves.

FORUM OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Accomplished women in business were the guest speakers at the recent forum 'Challenges Faced in Conducting Business in the Philippines' sponsored by the Australian Embassy. Shown, from left, are Vicky Garchitorena, president of the Ayala Foundation, Marixi Prieto, chair of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce, Nieves Confesor, dean of the Asian Institute of Management, and Laura del Rosario of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The forum was organized by the Australian Embassy in celebration of International Women's Month. Australia remains committed to empowering women through its Development Cooperation Program in the Philippines, of which projects supporting women have totaled more than P1 billion over the last five years. For more information, visit www.australia.com.ph.

WSA SIGNS UP 1ST GAME JOCK

Wireless Services Asia (WSA), leading provider of cutting-edge value-added services for the new era in the mobile entertainment industry, has signed up 16-year-old stunner Iya as the official endorser of the GameChannel-the first show in Asia that lets you participate in any of the five TV-arcade games armed only with your mobile phone. The Game Channel brings the world of interactive TV to a new level. It airs on IBC 13 every Tuesday and Thursday, 6 to 7 p.m. Shown are manager Arnold Vegafria, GJ Iya, WSA senior vice president Manny Fernando, and Elena Villania.

Major animation competition at PTTC set in June

A PRESTIGIOUS animation competition will be held at the Philippine Trade Training Center on June 4 to 7 during the back-to-back staging of the 2nd Multimedia and Animation Show at the 8th Graphic Expo 2003.

Sponsored by Discreet, the world's best-selling and award-winning 3D solution, the competition provides a platform for Philippine animators to display their talent and creativity, for companies to promote their capability as service bureaus, and for institutes to exhibit their training and education modules, and thus inspire the emergence of new animators in the industry.

With this year's theme "Century of the Pacific", the participants will have to blend the magnificent wealth of motifs, colors and symbols of the traditional and modern cultures of East Asia and the Pacific using digital technology and motion graphics. The competition is open to students and professionals.

The participants should work their respective entries based on that theme in original 3D animation using 3ds max 5 with two minutes running time.

The concept should be entertaining, with no logos and brand names, and no use of foul action and language. Social relevance is optional.

Participation will be open to schools, universities, or training institutes with animation modules/courses, but only for the student level. For the professional level, the participants should come from animation or design studios and production houses.

A certification from the respective participating institution or companies should be submitted along with the application form. Each participant should submit a storyboard with proper description and sketches of their respective animation concept on or before April 15.

Copyright infringement will not be allowed and the list of sources of the audio-video materials used should be submitted with the entries. Hardware and software requirements will be provided by the contestants when selected for the final round. Entries should be in CD-ROM format using Quicktime with 1024x768 resolution. No compression allowed. Audio format should be in 44khz 16 bits stereo.

Deadline for submission of final entries is May 23.

The competition is one of the many highlights of the 2nd Multimedia and Animation Show 2003 to be held in tandem with the 8th Graphic Expo 2003, the country's premier tradeshow in digital imaging, prepress, print production and web publishing.

Other exciting activities during the event will include a trade exhibit by key industry players, technology seminars, digital photography workshop, and animation software application demonstration.

"The wide range of products and services in these two events is showcased under a unique concept of digital workflow complementation-a must-see annual event for every industry professional engaged in multimedia, animation, digital photography and imaging, graphic design, prepress, print and web publishing," says Ruth Luntao, project manager of Fiera de Manila Inc.

For more details, call Fiera de Manila Inc at 899-6893, 896-0637, 896-0639, fax 896-0637, or e-mail fieram2@info.com.ph, fiera@info.com.ph, or log on to www.fmi.com.ph.

Bits Clips

Winning travel program

A TOURISM-oriented credit card program of the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) has won the Pacific Asia Travel Association's (Pata) Gold Awards 2003 for the Industry Marketing-Credit Card Company Category. Endorsed by the DOT, BPI Credit Cards' Travel Madness 2002 offered clients a chance to appreciate the Philippines' Wealth of Wonders (WOW) through the lowest possible interest rates to such destinations as Boracay, Bohol, Davao, Palawan, Baguio and Banaue. Lauding BPI for supporting the WOW Philippines campaign, DOT Secretary Richard J. Gordon is encouraging Filipinos to travel around the country. This year's 33 awardees will be presented at a special luncheon today during the Pata Annual Conference in Bali, Indonesia. The winners were selected from among 310 entries.

World copyright day

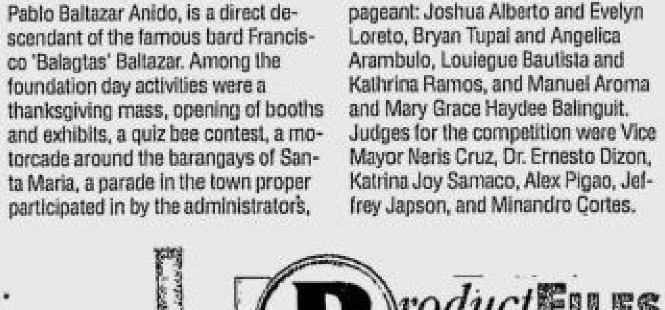
April 23 is World Book and Copyright Day. This year's celebration-the seventh since 1997-will again be spearheaded by the National Book Development Board (NBDB), under the theme "Developing Books, Developing Filipino Communities." The ceremonies will be held at the Filipinas Heritage Library in Makati City, where NBDB chair Dennis Gonzalez and other heads of government agencies will join some 80 representatives from the various book-industry organizations and other sectors in the country involved in literacy promotion and reading advocacy. NBDB'S help desk and the establishment of public reading corners and book displays will be launched. Topics of copyright protection and sourcing out funds for publishers and authors will be discussed.

UA&P finance seminar

THE UNIVERSITY of Asia and the Pacific School of Management holds its Finance for Non-Finance Managers seminar from April 23 to 25, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at the UA&P campus. Entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals in corporate and non-profit organizations are encouraged to attend. Participants will familiarize themselves with the nature and scope of financial management, learn to analyze basic financial statements through the computation of ratios, obtain an overview of working capital management and the capital budgeting process, attain greater understanding of the funds flow statement and the impact of capital structure decisions, and gain confidence in financial planning. For details call Elsie Laguador or Lea Riñon at 634-2834 or 637-0912 local 241, fax 634-2823, or e-mail cme@uap.edu.ph.

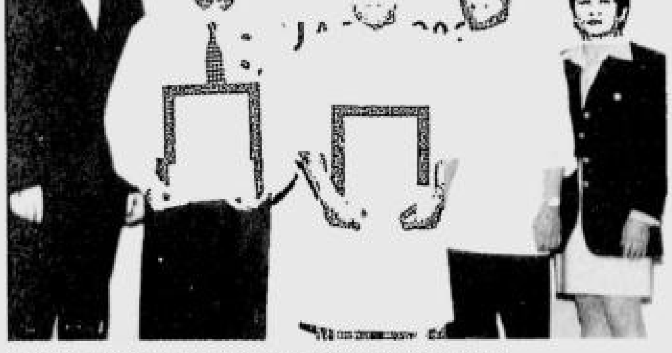
NZM APPOINTS PR AGENCY

New Zealand Milk (NZM) Philippines recently appointed Nancy Harel and Associates Inc. (NHAI) as the PR agency for its newest product Anchor Wam!. Shown during the contract signing are Richard Tay, NZM marketing manager (seated left) and Nancy Harel, NHAI president and CEO. Witnessing the event are (standing, from left) Joy Mangubat, Anchor Wam! brand manager, Niza Forschler, NHAI PR group head, and Peegy Yparraguirre, Anchor Wam! brand assistant. Anchor Wam! is a fruit-flavored milk drink ideal for today's smart and dynamic kids. It comes in cool and refreshing flavors, Orange Chill, Mango Magic, Strawberry Spin and Apple Dew. NZM Philippines is the maker of premium milk brands such as Anchor Full Cream Milk, Anmum, Anlene and Ucare.



ASIATECH IS ONE

AsiaTech College at Poblacion, Santa Maria, Bulacan, recently celebrated its first foundation anniversary. Recognized by the Commission on Higher Education, its president, engineer Pablo Baltazar Anido, is a direct descendant of the famous bard Francisco 'Balagtas' Baltazar. Among the foundation day activities were a thanksgiving mass, opening of booths and exhibits, a quiz bee contest, a motorcade around the barangays of Santa Maria, a parade in the town proper participated in by the administrators, teachers and students of AsiaTech, and the selection of Mr and Miss AsiaTech held at the municipal hall supported by Mayor Omeng Ramos. Shown were the winners of the pageant: Joshua Alberto and Evelyn Loreto, Bryan Tupal and Angelica Arambulo, Louiegue Bautista and Kathrina Ramos, and Manuel Aroma and Mary Grace Haydee Balinguit. Judges for the competition were Vice Mayor Neris Cruz, Dr. Ernesto Dizon, Katrina Joy Samaco, Alex Pigao, Jeffrey Japson, and Minandro Cortes.



CENTURY PARK'S QUALITY EMPLOYEES

Manolo Hintay, senior telephone operator of rooms division and Aristedes Magallanes, kitchen helper of food and beverage, were named by the hotel's quality improvement committee as non F&B and F&B Quality Employees for January 2003. They were awarded cash and gift certificates in simple ceremonies held at the hotel. Shown are (from left) general manager Paul Gill, Hintay, Magallanes, executive chef Rudy Velasco and rooms division manager Yollie Dimayuga.

Product Files

Let 3M take Command

HOW DO you organize eyesores and accident traps like messy appliance and electrical cords? 3M has introduced the Command Adhesive Cord Management Products-a line of self-stick cord clips and a cord bundler for organizing electrical cords and cables. The new 3M line gives neat, easy solutions to the everyday challenge of keeping cords and wires in place for safety and aesthetic purposes.

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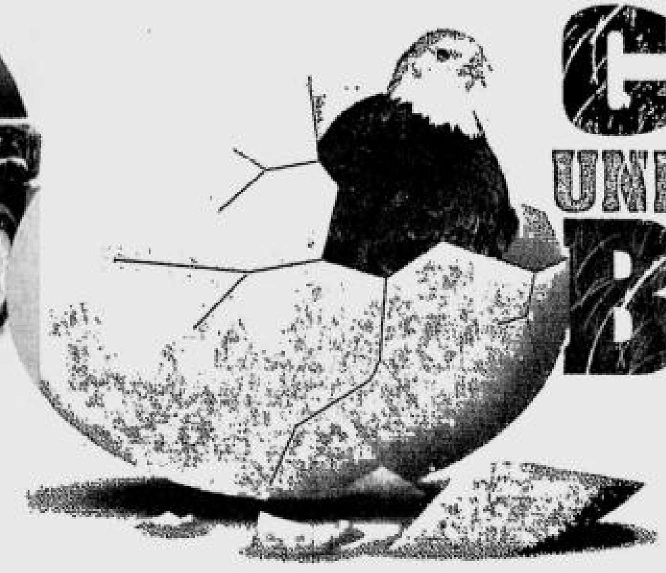
Check out these 3M Cord Management and other Command Adhesive products at Ace Hardware, Handyman Do It Best, Handyman Home Improvement Center, The Landmark, SM Workshop and True Value Hardware. For more information, call 3M Philippines at 813-3781 or visit www.commandadhesive.com.

DJ VISION PROVIDES PRIME ENTERTAINMENT

DJ Vision Entertainment Co., headed by Dennis Cabuso, was chosen by the Metro Daet Development Foundation Inc., an association of Camarines Norte residents in Metro Manila, to provide the entertainment during the recent launch of the History Research project. Held at Club Filipino, Greenhills, the event was filled with warm smiles and attended by prominent personalities such as former Sen. Raul Roco, beauty titlist Michelle Reyes, Liwayway Vinzons-Chato, Dyan Castillejo-Garcia and mom Editha Castillejo, and Mayor Tito S. Sarion. The short program segments were hosted by Jackie Castillejo. Shown, from left, are PR consultant Ayo Grande Gunting, Michelle Reyes, Jackie Castillejo and Dennis Cabuso.

CHOICED CUTS UNPRECEDENTED BREAK



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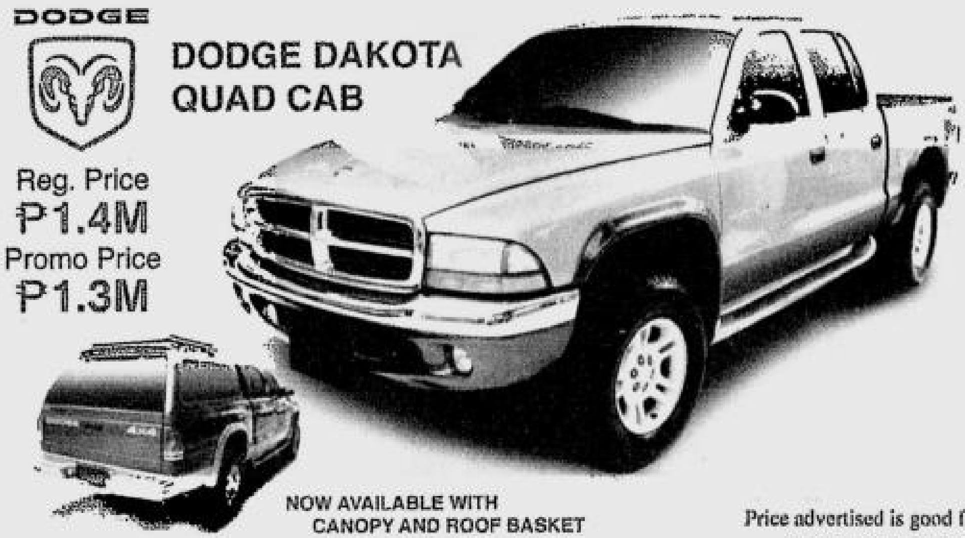

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BusinessMonday

Protecting families of overseas workers

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

OVERSEAS work creates jobs for seven million Filipinos. It allows labor to get paid in dollars, yielding a bonanza via the exchange rate. It brings in much foreign exchange and it shows the sheer talent of the Filipino worker to the global community.

Alas, work abroad also strains the ties between spouses. Some husbands or wives go astray with illicit affairs. Others simply split. Children grow up without the protective arms of their fathers, or the tender hands of their mothers.

High risks to family life accompany the big money gains. How then can the Filipino family, in need of jobs, be spared from the wrenching strains of distance?

Here are some avenues to explore. The object is to maximize the dollars earned yet minimize their time spent away from the family.

Outsourcing

One way is for the workers to earn in dollars but stay in the Philippines. This can be done through outsourcing. American and European firms distribute their work to countries with lower wages, including the Philippines. The US corporations benefit via lower payroll in dollar terms, but Filipino professionals gain from higher salaries in peso terms.

The firms here handle their financial statements, analyze their raw data and turn them into reports. They take calls from customers and do telephone marketing. They even create company software. The work is e-mailed and edited back and forth between New York and Manila.

Certification

What about the workers who really must leave the country?

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US investors sour on niche foreign funds

NEW YORK—When stocks were hot, US fund firms rolled out regional mutual funds that zeroed in on places like Eastern Europe, Scandinavia or China. But now, many investors are giving these funds the cold shoulder.

International funds have struggled during the stocks downturn, but times are especially tough for funds that invest predominantly in one corner of the world. Some of these funds have performed better than broader international funds, but many US investors are shunning them nevertheless because they want less narrow, less risky offerings, analysts say.

"People in general have been moving away from rifle-shot choices, because they know those are risky," said Don Cassidy, senior analyst at research firm Lipper Inc. "They are moving in the direction of more general choices."

Regional funds

Regional stock funds have seen cash outflows in the last few years, while diversified international funds, which invest in all kinds of stocks outside of the United States, have taken in new money, Lipper data show. As assets have fallen, some funds are liquidating or merging with more broadly focused funds, because fund firms no longer find them profitable.

In the first two months of 2003 alone, diversified international stock funds pulled in a net $2.29 billion in new cash, while the three regional categories of Europe funds, Latin American funds and Asia funds that exclude pure Japan funds recorded combined net withdrawals of $169 million, according to Lipper, a unit of Reuters Group Plc .

Fidelity Investments, the biggest US fund company, offers several region-specific funds, including the $62.3 million Fidelity Nordic fund, which research firm Morningstar Inc. says is believed to be the only open-end mutual fund for US investors that invests predominantly in Nordic countries.

The fund focuses on Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Nordic fund

While Fidelity manages sizable assets in the Nordic fund as well as other region-specific portfolios that appeal to some investors, such narrowly focused funds are not recommended for most portfolios, said Gregg Wolper, a Morningstar analyst. Most investors get enough diversification with one or two broad funds that focus on markets worldwide, he said.

"It's hard to argue that someone would want just companies in that small area, rather than companies around the world, but Fidelity has sometimes shown they can make it work," Wolper said.

A Fidelity spokesman said the company is committed to offering a broad range of funds, and said region-specific funds are designed to supplement broadly diversified funds.

Regional funds "provide a means by which a knowledgeable or relatively sophisticated investor who already has a broadly diversified portfolio can gain exposure to a particular region of the world," Fidelity spokesman Scott Beyerl said.

Performance of regional funds varies widely. Europe funds, which attract many investors who want to invest internationally but steer clear of Japan or Latin America, fell 6.46 percent for each of the last five years for the period through April 3, according to Lipper. In comparison, broad international funds lost 6.55 percent. Latin America funds fell 7.5 percent.

Regional funds make up only a small portion of total US fund assets. Diversified international funds manage about $158.3 billion, while Europe funds, for example, manage just $12.2 billion, according to Lipper.

Many niche funds within the broader categories of Europe or Asia funds got started during the 1990s' bull market. Some funds targeted Eastern European stocks, for example, in hopes of capitalizing on growth in the post-Communist era.

Reuters

Books LIFESTYLE
For feedback, text us at (0919)880-33-54 or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso Subsection Editor Lito Zulueta

Outrageous 'Fortune'

By Ruel S. De Vera

"Sons of Fortune"
By Jeffrey Archer
Macmillan, London,
2002, 517 pages

REVIEW

AS far as lives stranger than their fiction is concerned, Jeffrey Archer is the best example when it comes to contemporary British writers.

A former member of the House of Commons, Archer is also currently incarcerated in a British prison after having been found guilty of perjury. Yet he is also known for crafting audacious bestsellers about great men and great falls in books such as "Kane and Abel," "A Matter of Honour" and "The Fourth Estate." Draw your own conclusions.

His newest novel, "Sons of Fortune," has a premise so hackneyed it's hard to believe it sold as a novel. Yet Archer was able to write a rather engaging, substantial book regardless of how patently ridiculous the whole idea is.

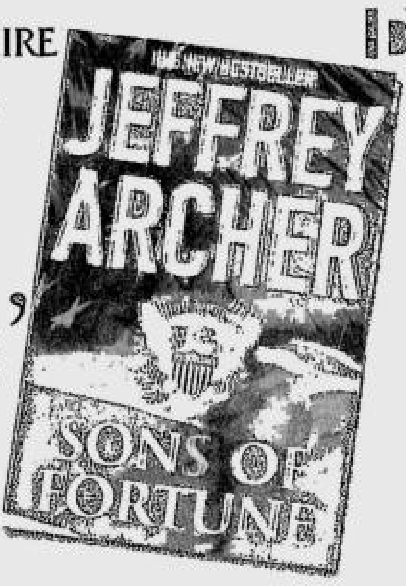
Shows you how popular he is, how wasted his considerable talent when he produces stuff like this. But we will read him anyway.

"Sons of Fortune" is a great American saga from a British writer, one that crosses over several decades.

When the Cartwrights, a hard-working, all-American couple, find out that wife Susan has given birth to twins, they are overjoyed. But then, in the same hospital, with the same nurse and doctor, the wealthy Davenports have yet to find out that, despite years of futile attempts, the only baby they've produced has died.

But one act by a conflicted doctor and the silence of the nurse ensures a

OUTRAGEOUS/ D3



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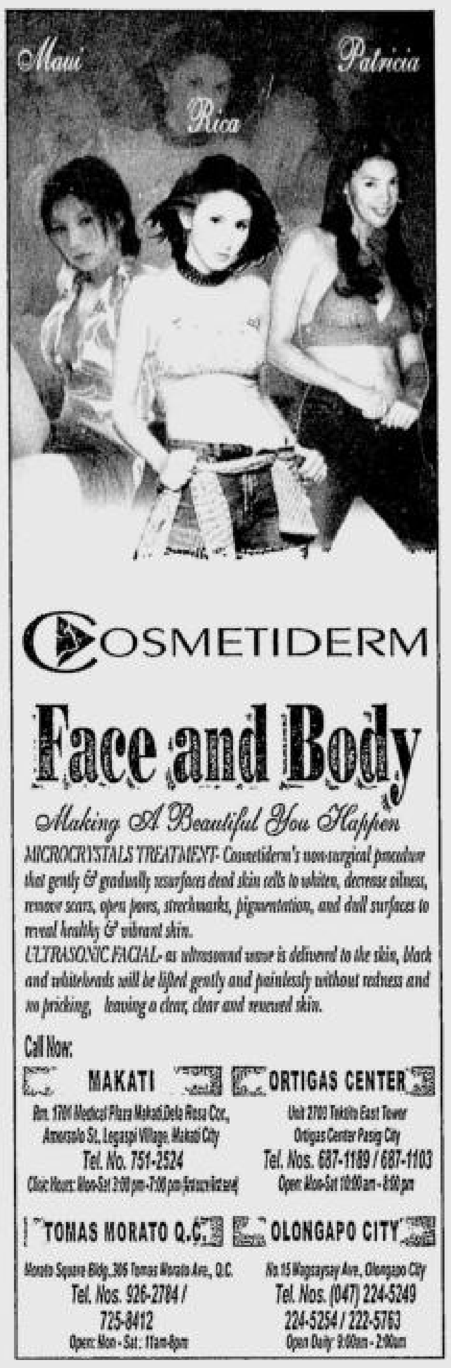

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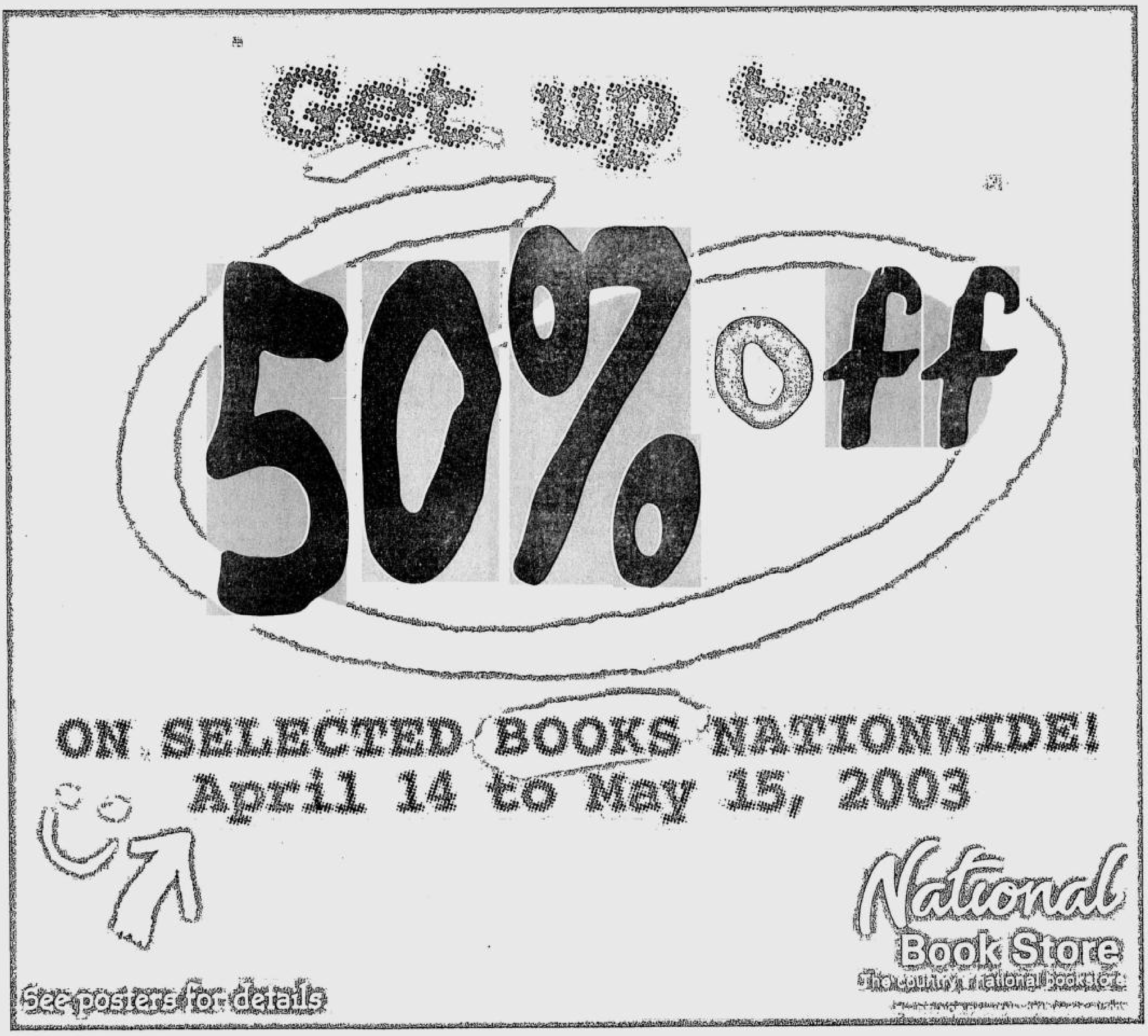
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EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Revolution gets new leader

By Butch Hernandez
Contributor

EDUCATION Revolution activities will further intensify this coming school year as Dr. Maria Lim Ayuyao of Centro Escolar University assumes the presidency of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWWPP).

At a special dinner held April 4 at Morita's, Eggie Apostol, who has been president for six years, announced she would now be the FWWPP's board chair.

FWWPP trustee-on-leave and special guest Education Sec. Edilberto de Jesus, together with Dr. Jose V. Abueva and lawyer Felicitas A. Arroyo, welcomed Dr. Ayuyao's selection.

"Everywhere I go, the people I meet always talk about the deplorable state of Philippine education. Now I don't believe in complaining. I'd rather work towards really viable solutions like Adopt-a-School and Mentoring the Mentors," Dr. Ayuyao said.

Through the Education Revolution, the FWWPP hopes to help communities identify and use whatever assets they have to improve the quality of education in public schools.

"They'll also get a 150-percent tax incentive," Dr. Ayuyao added.

Dr. Ayuyao, "Butchie" to close friends, brings with her 20 years of experience and expertise in education, which she will surely rely on as she leads the Education Revolution to greater heights.

She is a member of the board of the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (Pacu), the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning, the Foundation for Upgrading the Standards of Education (FUSE), and the Coordinating Council of Private Education Associations (Cocopea).

Since its launch late last year, the Education Revolution has made significant gains across the nation. Regional school-adoption core teams have been organized in Central Luzon, based in Angeles University, and in Negros province, spearheaded by La Consolacion College and the First Human Development Foundation.

FWWP corporate secretary and treasurer Atty. Felicitas A. Arroyo

> Dr. Maria Lim Ayuyao of CEU is FWWPP's new president

There is a also a continuing effort to set up a national network of education stakeholders, especially in Central Luzon.

Aside from being the chief advocate of quality education in Philippine public schools, Dr. Ayuyao will be overseeing the establishment of school adoption core teams in Misamis and Cagayan de Oro, in Davao City and other parts of the country.

She will also supervise the regional implementation of the Mentoring the Mentors program, which will have a pilot project in Bukidnon State College and in May at the Iloilo state colleges.

DR. MARIA Lim Ayuyao, the new president of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power

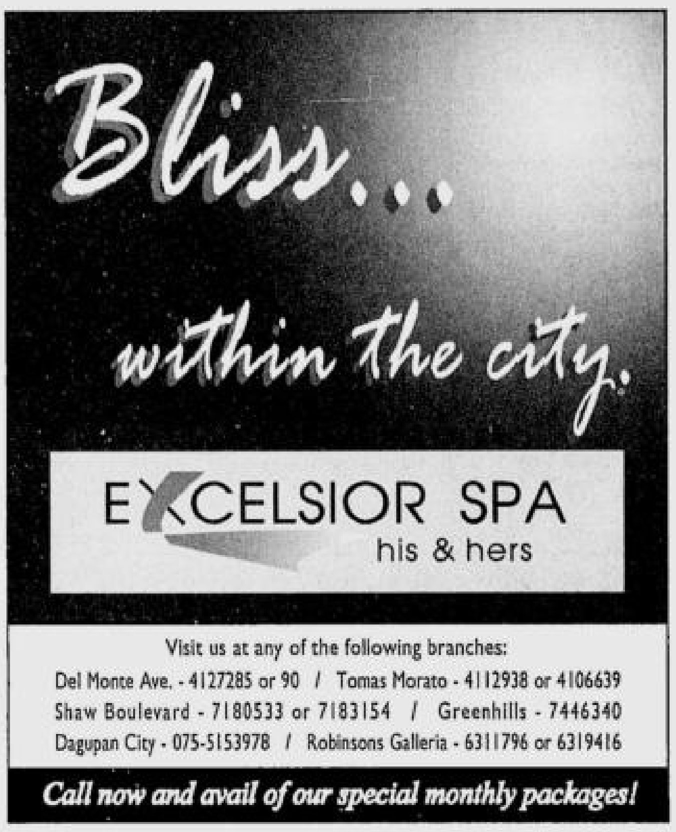
Support for Laguna schools

Andy Saracho, community relations manager of the CBK Power Company Ltd. in Laguna, said the firm planned to expand corporate support for public schools in the province.

Saracho said the company already started a college scholarship program for 10 students and was looking forward to sending more in the coming years.

CBK Power Company hoped to formally participate in the Education Revolution very soon, Saracho added.

The author is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.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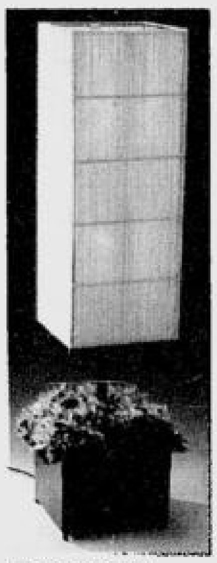
Filipino and UK designers promote British design education through exhibit


CREATIVE UK design using indigenous Filipino material.

"MEASURE for Measure," an exhibit organized by the British Council and The Podium, captures the vibrant, dynamic fusion of UK design with Filipino talent and craftsmanship.

The exhibit, which runs until April 20 at The Podium's Activity Area, will showcase the works of Studio Platform, a young industrial design team comprised of Nick Paterson and Nick Jinkinson, and those of Filipino designer Lesley Mobo of London's prestigious Central St. Martins.

Using creativity to foster trade partnerships between Britain and the Philippines, the British Council has teamed up with The Podium to promote British Design Education as a means to promote better understanding between the two countries.

The merging of UK design and Filipino craftsmanship brings out the best of these Western and Eastern cultures.

Precious lessons

Upon the prodding of Filipino design stalwarts Al Caronan and Reimon Gutierrez, the British Council developed a residency program in tandem with the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (Citem).

Nick Paterson and Nick Jinkinson were among the first to participate in this program. Both Industrial Design graduates of the Royal College of Art under Ron Arad's Design Products MA program, they set up Studio Platform in 2001, focusing on product, furniture and strategic design.

During their residency in the Philippines, the two Nicks had to demystify the process for factory owners and their workers, to make them understand why things are made a certain way.

DESIGN from Lesley Mobo's "Manic" collection

When Manila Furnishings and Apparel Market Exhibition (FAME) opened at World Trade Center in October, Studio Platform unveiled the results of Nick P.'s four-month stay in the Philippines with an array of products that gave a fresh perspective to the usual export items from Bicol, Bacolod and Iloilo. He observed how much respect seasoned buyers had for Filipino craftsmanship and its soulful creativity.

YOUNG and hip designers (from left) Nick Jinkinson, Nick Paterson and Lesley Mobo

Studio Platform also copped awards for Best Product Design for a fruit tray and vase setup culled from coco twigs manufactured by Hacienda Grafts of Bacolod. They clinched contracts for a return bout at Citem this month.

Mobo couture

Around that time, a young Filipino designer began taking the UK fashion scene by storm. Lesley Mobo, whose spectacular Manic collection was presented by Central St. Martins as its finale during the Graduate Fashion Week, was suddenly the toast of London fashion.

It's a long way for Lesley, who comes from Aklan. A Biology graduate from FEU, he trained under Inno Sotto and Francis Manalo Santos. Out of curiosity, he attended the British Council's education fair, and, as they say, the rest is history.

Two weeks before he graduated last year, Lesley began designing for Ignacio Ribeiro and Susan Clements for the Clements-Ribeiro and Cacharel lines. He then did collaborative work with Zandra Rhodes and the House of Fraser.

When Graduate Fashion Week came, Howard Tangye, head of womenswear at CSM, endorsed him to Italian designer Alberta Ferretti, and John Galliano's team, which considered giving him a slot in the House of Dior in Paris.

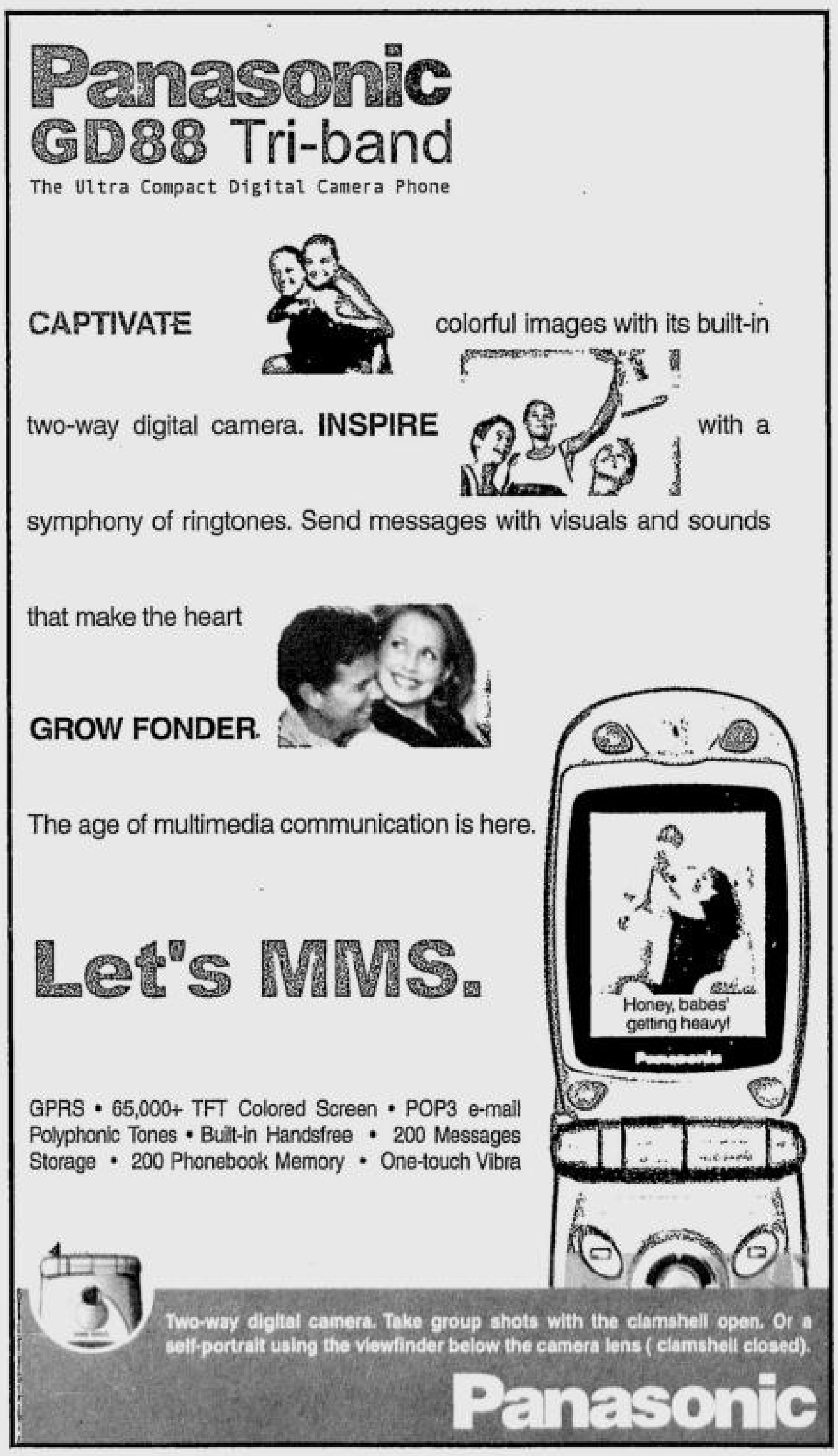
But Lesley's course doctor, Louise Wilson, who is also in charge of creatives for Donna Karan, offered him a special price for the masteral course at Central St. Martins, which he accepted.

Little did he imagine, however, that Jasmine Al-Fayed, daughter of Harrods owner Mohammad, would invite him to lunch and sign him to a contract which has enabled him to work and study at the same time.

Shortly thereafter, Jade Jagger, daughter of Sir Mick, got Garrad jewellers to have Lesley design dresses and accessories to define her image.

"Measure for Measure" is on the 2/L of The Podium on ADB Avenue in Ortigas Center.

FLIRTY, feminine piece from Lesley Mobo's "Manic" collection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Panasonic

April book picks

TAKE a journey to self-discovery in the novel "Back When We Were Grown-ups." It's a beguiling, moving and funny account of a post-menopausal woman in search of her former girlhood self.

Tap into your spiritual side and get a hold of "A Young Woman After God's Own Heart." This book will help young women grow close to God, enjoy meaningful relationships, make wise choices, become spiritually strong and fulfill the desires of their heart.

If cooking and chicken interest you, "Kitchen Library: Chicken" offers a multitude of tasty chicken dishes for everyday and festive occasions. There are recipes for delectable soups, salads and entrées.

In "Fading Angel," author Sande Dondhue teaches you step by step how to cope with taking care of an ill relative.

Are you problematic about your boyfriend or girlfriend? Then take Dr. Harley's Romantic Attitudes Questionnaire in "Buyers, Renters and Freeloaders." These three attitudes reveal what you can expect of each other in the future and transform a freeloader or renter into a fully committed buyer. So settle in and prepare to exchange your lease for a deed.

If you think homosexuality was just a modern phenomenon, "Lovers Legends: Gay Greek Myths" proves you wrong. This lavishly illustrated collection of myths sheds light on the Greek gods and heroes whose tastes in love included others of their own sex.

Explore the infinite possibilities of summer learning at Powerbooks Specialty Store. Call the Powerbooks hotline at 844-4455 or e-mail ibid@powerbooks.com.ph.

Outrageous 'Fortune'

From page D1

dramatic story. The dead child is substituted with one of the live twins. Thus Nat Cartwright and Fletcher Davenport leave the hospital and grow up completely unaware they're brothers.

"Sons" is in essence a story of American royalty, a novel that reflects what readers think Americans strive to become. What follows is a road trip through American history, with Nat and Fletcher almost always bumping into each other but never quite meeting. They even fall in, and out, of love with the same girl while both are young.

Yet their hearts waylay them to other directions. Finding other women, Nat and Fletcher also walk disparate paths through a growing American consciousness.

In keeping with that theme, Nat is drafted and winds up a Vietnam war hero before he returns to finish his studies. In the Ivy League, Fletcher makes a successful man out of himself.

As they build rather full lives around them, Nat becomes a successful banker while Fletcher is eventually elected senator.

Ironically, it is the machinations of a common enemy, Ralph Elliot, quite possibly the most evil, most manipulative villain readers of modern fiction will ever encounter, that brings them together.

Elliot is a cardboard bad guy, bad to the literal bone, but he is just so much fun to hate as Archer unapologetically turns him into the most reviled person in the Eastern Seaboard.

Again, ironically, Archer does the exact opposite with the non-identical twins. All right, so perhaps readers will go for the idea that they are long-lost siblings and are destined to reunite, but that both are—there's no other way to say it—perfect Ken dolls with perfect lives, is just too much.

Not only is it a bit much to swallow, but they become indistinguishable in parts, confusing the readers in the denser portions. While readers will be amazed and admiring of the concerted efforts of Nat and Fletcher, they will also be quite alienated by the almost superhuman feats of these wonder boys.

Archer also throws in supporting characters with enough subplots to stuff those student election ballot boxes.

Along the way, Archer uses "Sons" to teach his loyal readers an admittedly interesting lesson in baking, corporate takeovers and good old politics. And you have to give it to Archer that he knows his politics, and he knows how to keep the reader glued to "Sons."

Of course, the much-hidden secret that actually links Nat and Fletcher together will eventually surface. In the most bizarre, and most familiar, circumstances, this truth may threaten to change the very direction of "Sons." Or maybe not.

As if that whole setup isn't enough, Archer stages a surefire finale of fantastic proportion. He throws in a murder trial worthy of "Murder, She Wrote," a defense worthy of "Matlock" and a gubernatorial race for Connecticut between the two brothers worthy of, well, real life.

In keeping with the theme of excessive fiction, Archer keeps even attentive readers in the dark as to who wins the family showdown until...the second-to-the-last word in the entire novel.

So it's all a big bunch of hooey. "Sons" reads like an overheated movie-of-the-week as well as an overhyped mini-series. But it is a diverting exercise that is full of little fascinating details that make this dose of Americana all the more engaging.

Remember those awful TV shows that hook you into hopeless addiction and yet you can't bring yourself to tell anyone else you watch them? "Sons" is the novelistic equivalent.

So, if you have a long plane ride to en-

OUTRAGEOUS/ D4

Crystals as cure

DISCOVER the amazing power of crystals in Master Choa Kok Sui's "Pranic Crystal Healing."

The book suggests ways to use crystals to treat headaches, fever, menstrual discomfort, arthritis, hypertension, multiple sclerosis, and more. It includes the properties of crystals and how they are cleansed, charged, and programmed to perform specific tasks.

For more information, call the Institute for Inner Studies at 810-2808, 819-1874 and 812-2326.

Bookfair at UP Diliman

THE 7TH Academic Book Fair will be held July 14-18 at the University of the Philippines Bahay ng Alumni, Diliman, Quezon City. Organized by the Association of Booksellers for the Academe and the Professions (Abap), the five-day book fair has as theme "Of Books and Bytes: Connecting People, Information and Technology."

An added attraction is a librarians' seminar.

The fair will have a total of 56 booths. Computer companies and software dealers are invited to join.

Call Lydia Wenceslao at telefax 925-4572.

Book store ties up with PGH

FOLLOWING the successful "PowerBooks Paaral," PowerBooks Specialty Store is helping raise funds for the pediatric ward of the Philippine General Hospital.

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Severe = malala
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Respiratory = may kinalaman sa paghinga
Syndrome = sakit na walang matagpuang lunas

Ang SARS ay isang viral infection na nagdudulot ng sakit na pneumonia o ang paninikip at pamamaga ng baga. At ito'y maaaring umabot sa pagpanaw ng may sakit. Bata man o matanda ay pwedeng maging biktima nito.

Ano ang mga symptoms ng SARS?
- Ubo (dry cough) at sipon
- Mataas na lagnat (39°C pataas)
- Matinding pananakit ng katawan
- Kahirapan sa paghinga, maihahalintulad sa hika
- Patuloy na pananakit ng dibdib tuwing humihinga

Kapag maranasan ang ilan sa mga nabanggit na symptoms, manatiling kalmado at agad-agad tumungo sa pinakamalapit na ospital.

Paano kumakalat ang SARS?
Ang isang taong malusog ay maaaring magkaroon ng SARS kapag siya'y naubuhan o nabahingan ng taong may SARS.

Paano natin malalabanan ang SARS?
Ang SARS ay isang viral infection. Wala pa itong lunas, wala pang gamot. Ang tanging panlaban sa SARS ay ang pagpapalakas ng resistensya ng ating katawan.

Paano maiiwasan ang SARS?
- Wastong pagkain
- Regular exercise
- Wastong oras ng pagpapahinga
- Pag-inom ng vitamin C araw-araw.
- Pag-iwas sa mga bansang may kaso ng SARS tulad ng China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam at Thailand.
- Pag-alam at pag-unawa sa wastong impormasyon tungkol sa SARS.
- Pag-iwas sa pagkalat ng maling haka-haka.

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Outrageous 'Fortune'

From page D3

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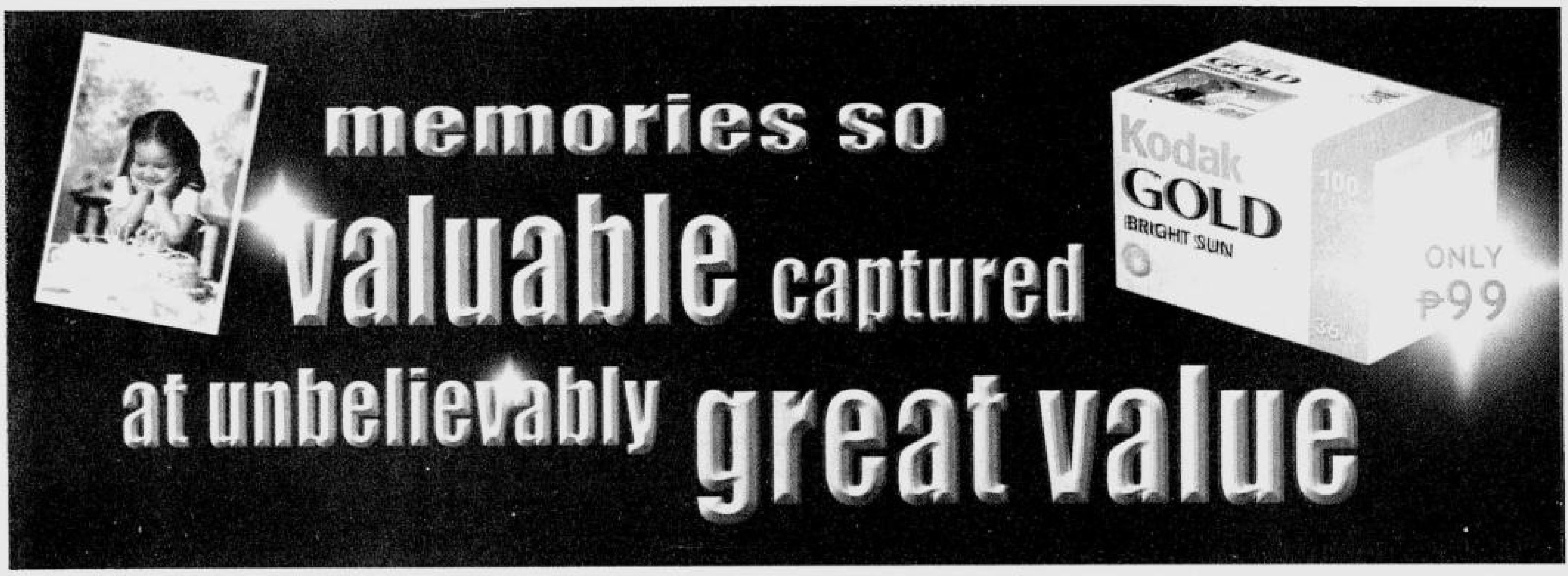

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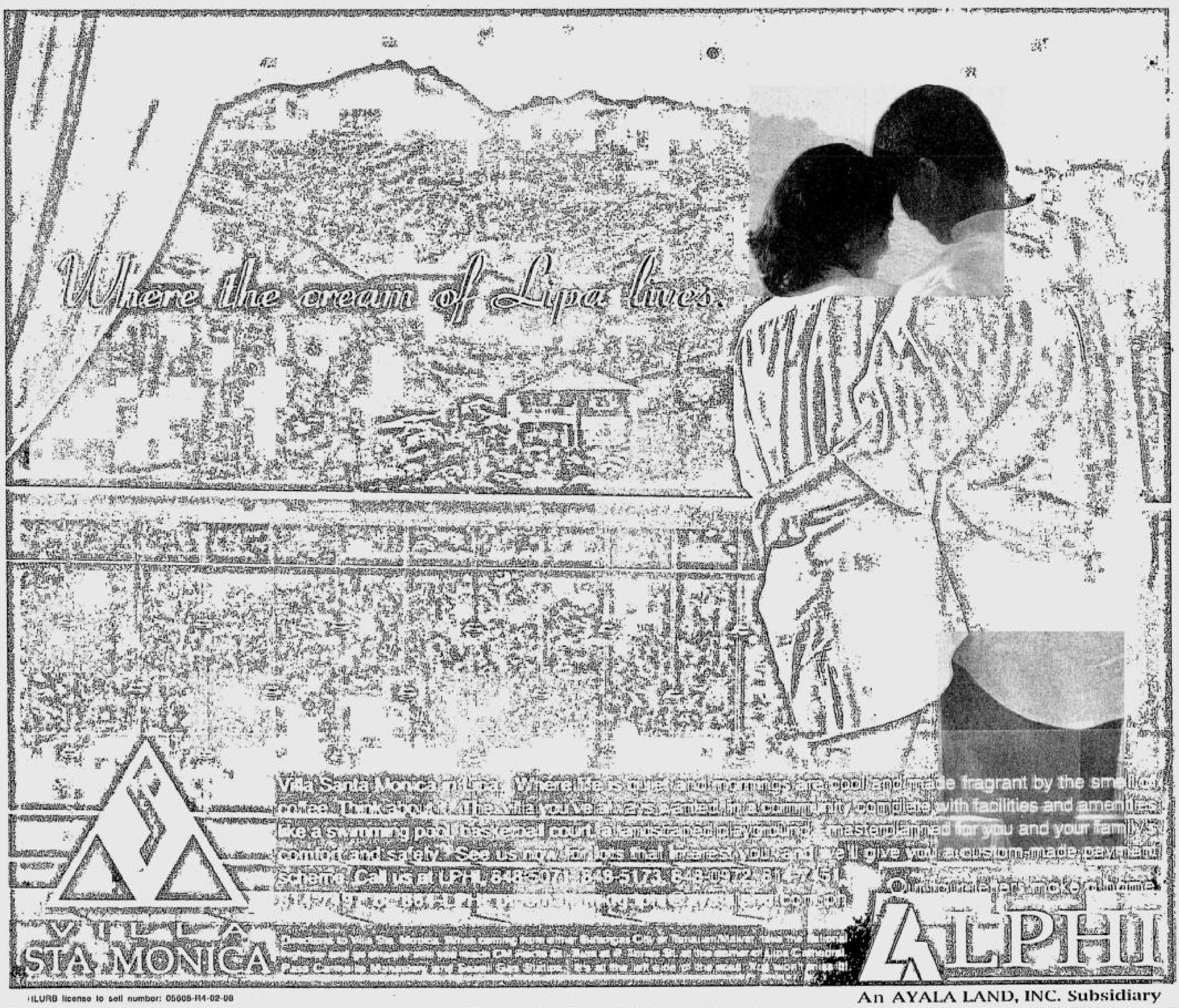
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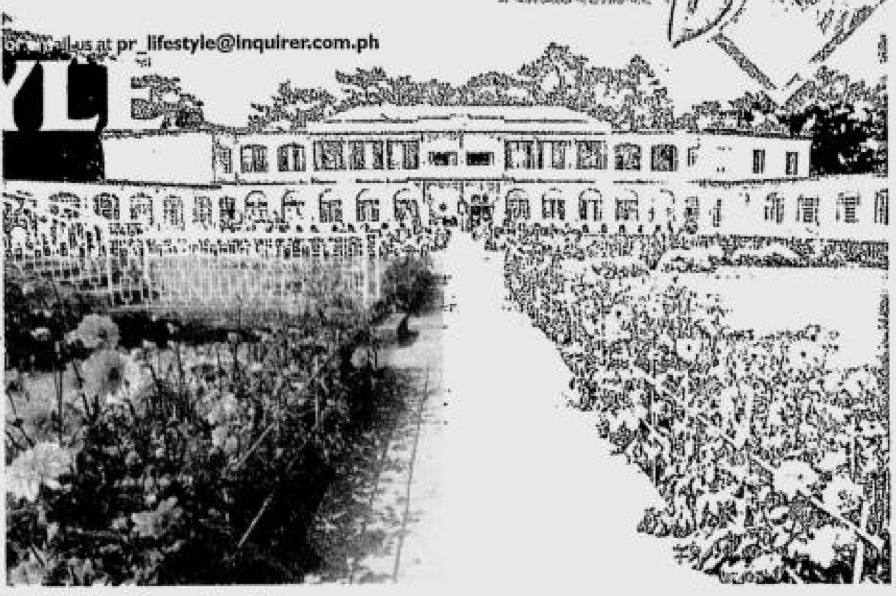

MAIN club of Camp John Hay

The Baguio that we don't know

SPACED OUT

Augusto F. Villalon

LITTLE do Filipinos realize that Baguio is a city of international significance. It is the only Philippine city that is part of the Hill Station tradition in Asia that flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Filipinos should feel so proud of it, the Philippines' only Hill Station, because it could be ranked among the most unique cities in Asia because of its geography, history and architecture.

Hill Stations were a colonial necessity. Westerners tended to melt in tropical heat, so they established Hill Stations where they could cool down.

The British built Darjeeling and Simla in the Himalayan foothills of India to escape the lowland heat. They also constructed the Cameron Highlands in Malaya (Malaysia) and Mamyo in Burma (Myanmar).

The French built Dalat in Vietnam, while the Dutch retreated to Bandung, nestled in the hills of western Java in Indonesia.

America's one and only

Americans built their own Hill Station high in the Philippine Cordilleras. Because of their limited foray into colonialism, Baguio was the Americans' only Hill Station in Asia, or anywhere else in the world for that matter. Even that single historic fact makes Baguio unique in the world.

The Western bureaucrats and businessmen who found themselves temporarily transplanted to Asia missed the four seasons of their homeland. In Asia, it is summer all year round.

The Westerners' difficulty with heat bordered on sheer intolerance and prompted them to say the heat "affected not only body but brain and disposition." To keep body and mind together, an escape was needed.

Hill Stations were the escape valves where the Westerners could literally let off accumulated tropical heat. Unlike the capital cities in the lowlands, Hill Stations were cool and quiet places surrounded by picturesque vistas and conducive to relaxation.

Hill Stations were for rejuvenation, a city that was like a mountain sanatorium, with the cool crisp air healing any tropical malaise picked up in the lowland.

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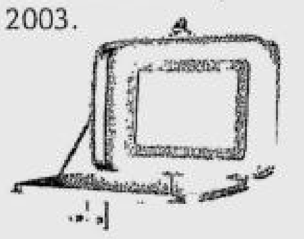

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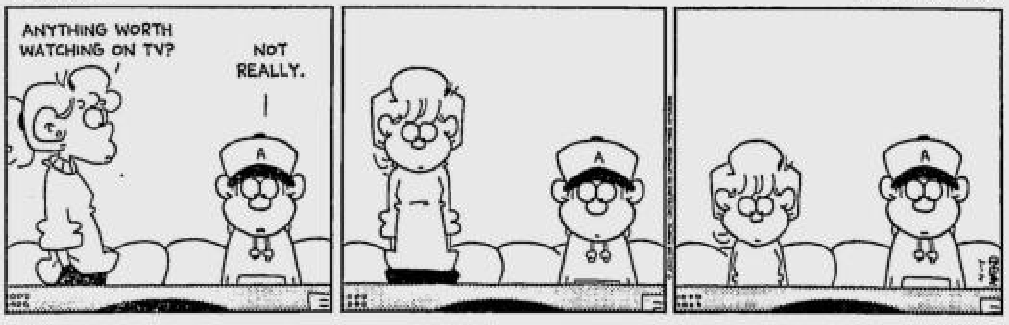
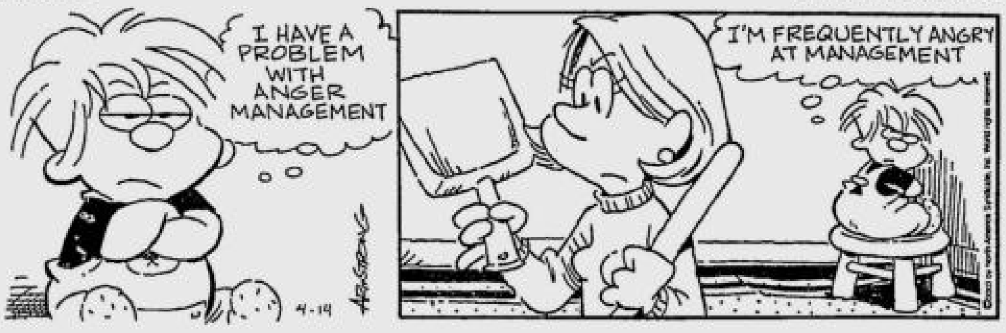
BY BILL AMEND


ANYTHING WORTH WATCHING ON TV?
NOT REALLY.

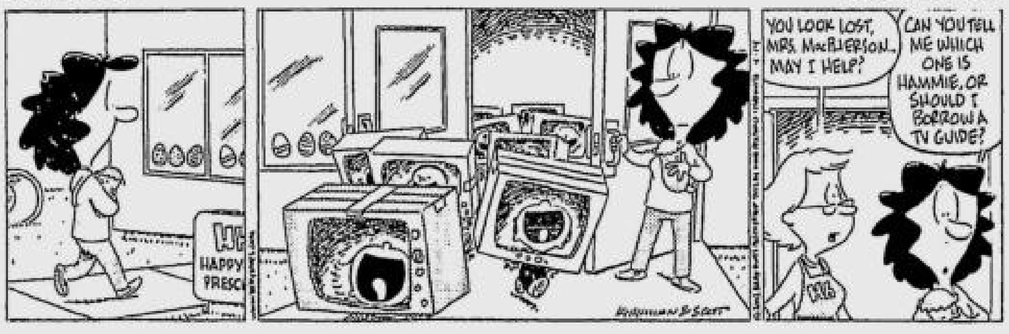
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ANGER MANAGEMENT
I'M FREQUENTLY ANGRY AT MANAGEMENT
4-14
ARMSTRONG

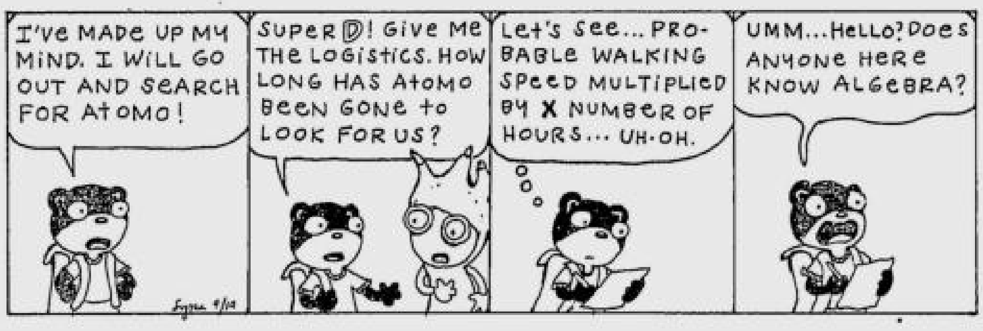
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HAPPY PRESC
YOU LOOK LOST, MRS. MacPHERSON... MAY I HELP?
CAN YOU TELL ME WHICH ONE IS HAMMIE, OR SHOULD I BORROW A TV GUIDE?
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'VE MADE UP MY MIND. I WILL GO OUT AND SEARCH FOR ATOMO!
SUPER D! GIVE ME THE LOGISTICS. HOW LONG HAS ATOMO BEEN GONE TO LOOK FOR US?
LET'S SEE... PROBABLE WALKING SPEED MULTIPLIED BY X NUMBER OF HOURS... UH-OH.
UMM... HELLO? DOES ANYONE HERE KNOW ALGEBRA?
Lyra 4/14

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are extremely organized. You like to build structures and are very involved with your surroundings. Your ability to observe and plan serves you well. Others often hero-worship you at some point in your life. The year ahead will be social, friendly and beautifully promising for romance.
Birthdate of: Emma Watson, actress; Leonardo da Vinci, artist/engineer/ inventor; Bessie Smith, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might feel tense today because tomorrow's Full Moon is the only Full Moon this year opposite your sign. Feelings of impatience or anxiety will disappear once the Full Moon has peaked tomorrow afternoon.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You'll need extra patience when dealing with people at work today. This doesn't mean there's anything wrong with others; it means that your own fuse is a little short.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Don't jump to conclusions when dealing with children or romantic liaisons. Give yourself time to think about things, so you can react properly.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Authority figures are challenging today. Today is stressful for everyone. Avoid giving others anything to react to in a big way.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Be careful driving, walking or biking. Everything having to do with ground transportation is subject to glitches and minor stress. Try to be calm and cooperative.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you feel pressured to spend money or give someone something, stop for a minute. You don't have to feel pressured to do anything. If you're not ready—you're not ready.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Tomorrow's Full Moon is in Libra. Naturally, you feel a bit edgy today. Once the Full Moon has peaked tomorrow afternoon, all this stress will immediately diminish. (Thank goodness.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't be too bossy at work today. You are powerful, and you're determined to organize yourself better on the job. Others might not share your enthusiasm. Chill out.

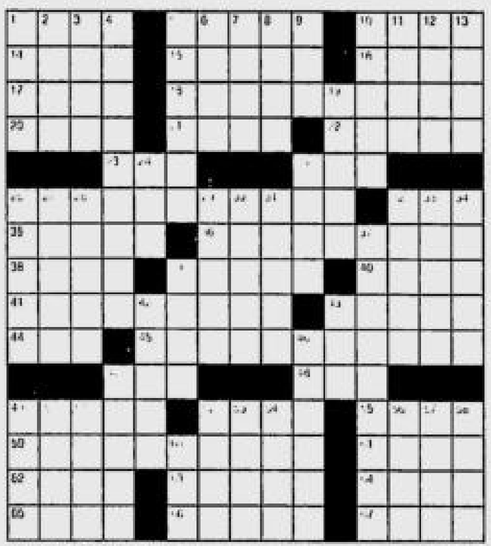
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't be demanding when it comes to children, sports or getting your way with most things. You might suddenly act a bit childish. You don't have to: Just count to three.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is not the ideal day to talk to authority figures or family members about anything important at home. Wait till later in the week, when everyone is much more receptive. Success is all about timing.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Take extra precautions when driving today. Be careful using machinery. Tomorrow's Full Moon involves an aggressive relationship to fire and metal. Today is the buildup of that relationship.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Resist the urge to do something foolish with respect to impulse buying. You don't want to spend money on something that you'll later regret, right?

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
4/14/03

ACROSS
1 Cup edge
5 Islamic scholars
10 Fox's title
14 Bonheur or Parks
15 Song for nine voices
16 Actress Olin
17 "__ Lang Syne"
18 Stick-in-the-mud
20 Venison source
21 __-majesty
22 Irregularly notched
23 Altar sentence
25 Kander's partner in musicals
26 Coward
32 AARP-ers
35 Actress Barkin
36 Restorative
38 Alda or Ladd
39 Layer under the epidermis
40 Molten flow
41 Lawyer's record
43 Challenger
44 987-65-4321 grp.
45 Disorderly haste
47 File marker
48 "My country _ of..."
49 For all to hear
52 Tableland
55 Eye part
59 Dawdle
61 Summoned, old-style
62 Prepared-food shop
63 Come to pass
64 Oscar winner Kedrova
65 Break sharply
66 Male growth
67 Fall garden?

DOWN
1 Upholstery nail
2 Reprobate
3 Skye or Wight
4 Tomato consomme
5 Lake feeder
6 Pouting face
7 Sentence extenders
8 Ancient Iranian
9 Porker's pad
10 Dust-jacket info
11 Make over
12 Brings to closure
13 Madcap Martha
19 Dutch-born American physicist
24 Put on
25 Building wings
26 "The Winding Stair" poet
27 Immigrant's island
28 Andes animal
29 Printing pioneer Andreas
30 Sign on a door
31 Nonclerics
32 Drummer Ringo
33 Missouri or Ohio
34 Frightening
37 Credible
39 Carp cousin
42 Protected from the sun
43 Cato's 601
46 Remained
47 Dutch flower
49 Throws in
50 Legal claim
51 __ podnda
52 Horse do
53 Adamson's lioness
54 Disparaging remark
56 Police bust
57 Not working
58 Penn name
60 Cotillion gal

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	O	R	E	H	E	A	D	■	R	A	S	C	A	L
A	P	O	L	O	G	U	E	■	E	N	T	R	E	E
F	U	S	S	P	O	T	S	■	S	C	L	E	R	A
A	L	E	■	■	■	O	K	L	A	H	O	M	A	N
R	E	A	M	E	R	■	S	I	L	O	■	O	T	T
I	N	T	I	M	A	L	■	P	E	R	■	N	E	O
S	T	E	A	M	I	E	R	■	■	■	F	A	D	S
■	■	■	M	A	D	E	A	F	A	C	E	■	■	■
S	A	H	I	■	■	■	P	O	L	A	N	S	K	I
C	U	E	■	P	L	A	■	B	O	N	D	M	A	N
A	R	C	■	R	I	G	A	■	E	S	S	A	Y	S
R	O	L	L	E	D	O	U	T	■	■	■	R	O	E
A	R	O	U	S	E	■	D	I	A	B	E	T	I	C
B	A	S	T	E	R	■	I	N	S	O	L	E	N	T
S	L	E	E	T	S	■	T	A	P	P	I	N	G	S

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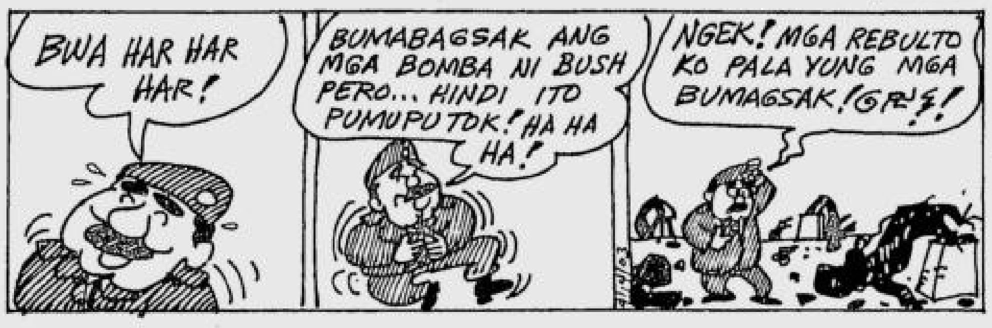
4/14/03

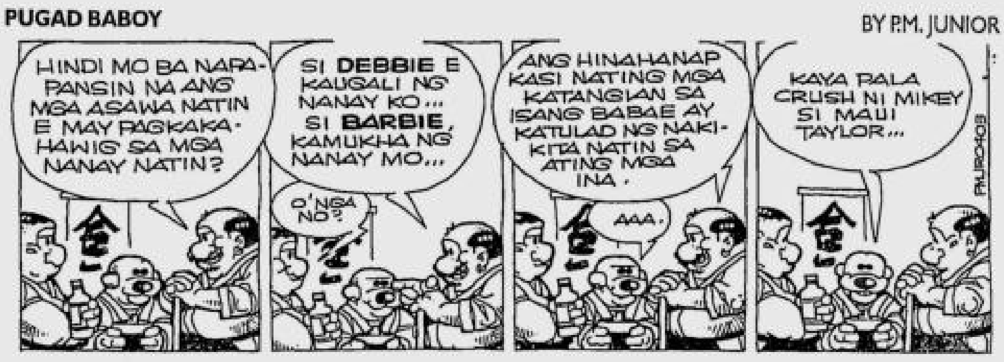
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BWA HAR HAR HAR!
BUMABAGSAK ANG MGA BOMBA NI BUSH PERO... HINDI ITO PUMUPUTOK! HA HA HA!
NGEK! MGA REBULTO KO PALA YUNG MGA BUMAGSAK! GR!$!

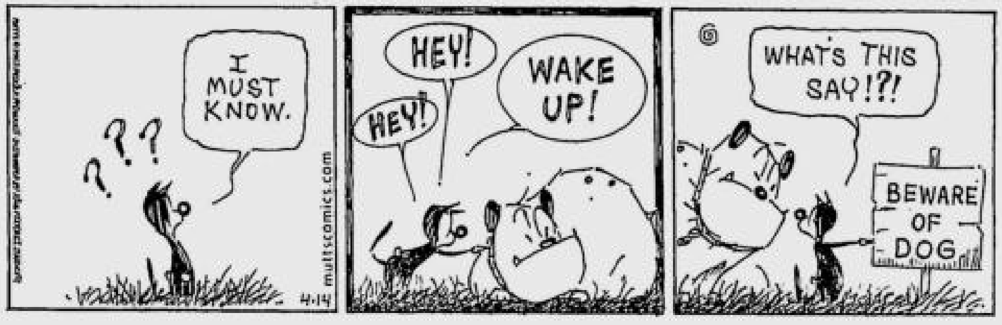
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


HINDI MO BA NAPAPANSIN NA ANG MGA ASAWA NATIN E MAY PAGKAKAHAWIG SA MGA NANAY NATIN?
SI DEBBIE E KAUGALI NG NANAY KO... SI BARBIE, KAMUKHA NG NANAY MO...
O'NGA NO?
ANG HINAHANAP KASI NATING MGA KATANGIAN SA ISANG BABAE AY KATULAD NG NAKIKITA NATIN SA ATING MGA INA.
AAA.
KAYA PALA CRUSH NI MIKEY SI MAUI TAYLOR...

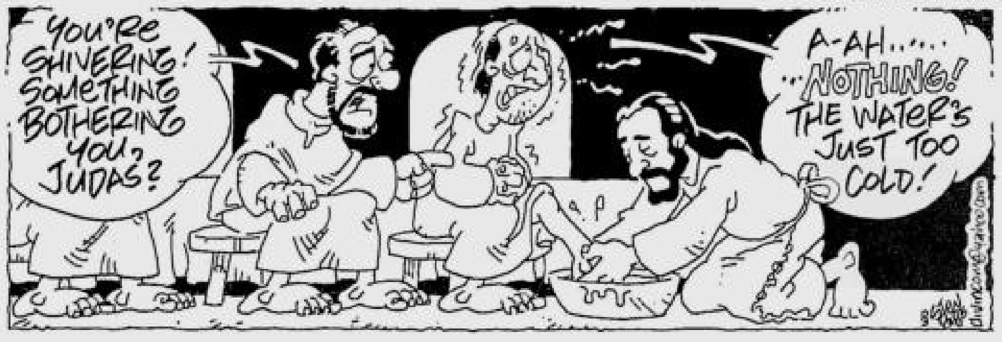
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


???
I MUST KNOW.
4·14
muttscomics.com
HEY!
HEY!
WAKE UP!
WHAT'S THIS SAY!?!
BEWARE OF DOG

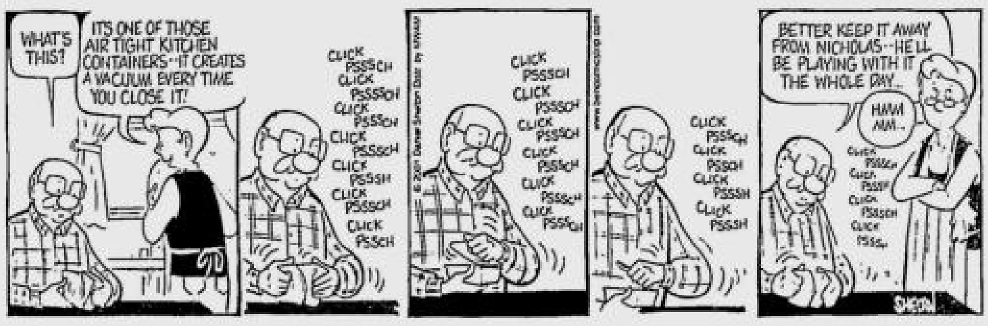
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


YOU'RE SHIVERING! SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU, JUDAS?
A-AH...... ...NOTHING! THE WATER'S JUST TOO COLD!

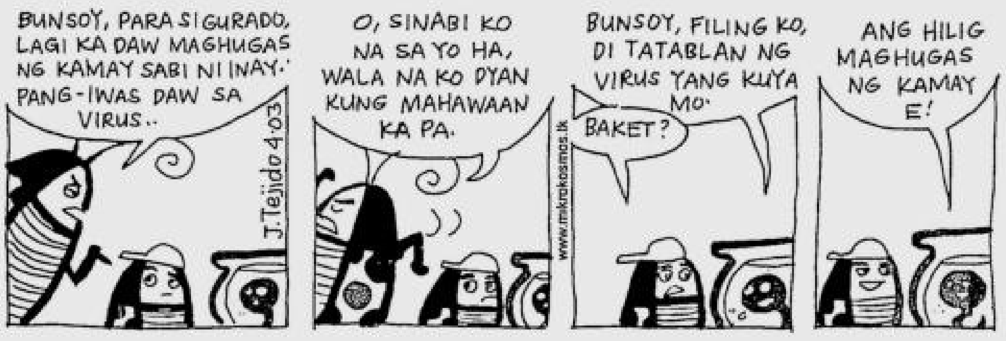
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT'S THIS?
ITS ONE OF THOSE AIR TIGHT KITCHEN CONTAINERS--IT CREATES A VACUUM EVERY TIME YOU CLOSE IT!
CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSCH
CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSSCH
www.bencomicstrip.com
CLICK PSSSCH CLICK PSSCH CLICK PSSSH CLICK PSSSH
BETTER KEEP IT AWAY FROM NICHOLAS--HE'LL BE PLAYING WITH IT THE WHOLE DAY...
HMM MM..
SHELTON

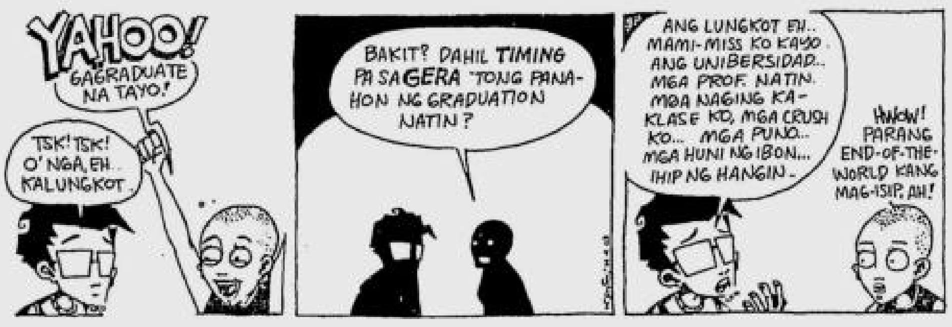
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, PARA SIGURADO, LAGI KA DAW MAGHUGAS NG KAMAY SABI NI INAY. PANG-IWAS DAW SA VIRUS..
J. Tejido 4·03
O, SINABI KO NA SA YO HA, WALA NA KO DYAN KUNG MAHAWAAN KA PA.
www.mikrokosmos.tk
BUNSOY, FILING KO, DI TATABLAN NG VIRUS YANG KUYA MO.
BAKET?
ANG HILIG MAGHUGAS NG KAMAY E!

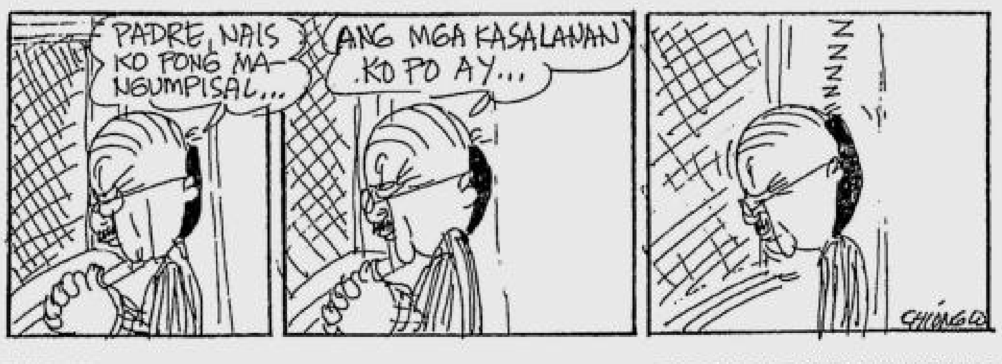
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


YAHOO! GAGRADUATE NA TAYO!
TSK! TSK! O' NGA, EH. KALUNGKOT.
BAKIT? DAHIL TIMING PA SA GERA 'TONG PANAHON NG GRADUATION NATIN?
ANG LUNGKOT EH.. MAMI-MISS KO KAYO.. ANG UNIBERSIDAD.. MGA PROF. NATIN. MGA NAGING KAKLASE KO, MGA CRUSH KO... MGA PUNO.. MGA HUNI NG IBON... IHIP NG HANGIN..
HWOW! PARANG END-OF-THE-WORLD KANG MAG-ISIP, AH!

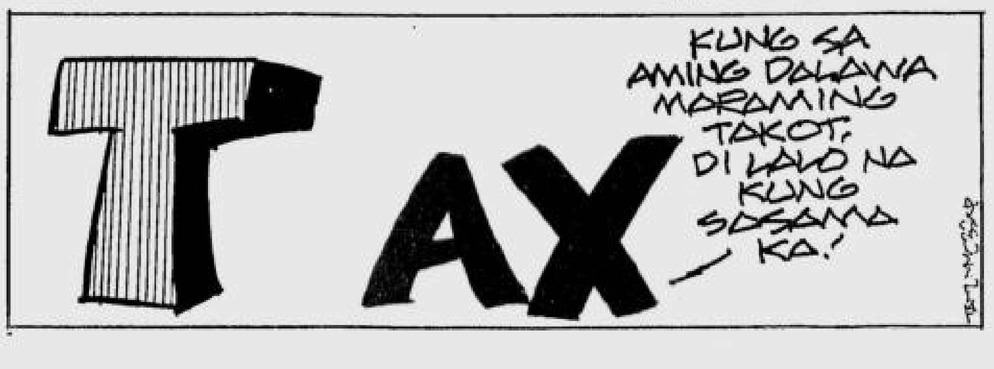
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PADRE, NAIS KO PONG MANGUMPISAL...
ANG MGA KASALANAN KO PO AY...
ZZZZZ
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


T AX
KUNG SA AMING DALAWA MARAMING TAKOT, DI LALO NA KUNG SASAMA KA!

Samoy at Samoy's Art Museum; Group exhibit at Maryknoll

ANTENOR R. Samoy's new exhibit opens April 16 at the Samoy Arts Museum, 151 E. Gomez St., Poblacion Bacoor, Cavite. The exhibit ends May 31. Call (046) 434-2625.

GROUP EXHIBIT. A group exhibit of paintings and sculptures, is ongoing until June 22 at The Sanctuary Gallery, Maryknoll, Camp Sioco, Baguio City. The show features the works of Aldo Bautista, Shan Jose, Karlo Pallas and Vincent Santayana. Call (074) 442-4602 or e-mail era@bgo.csi.com.ph.

VISUAL ARTS

USING the map collection of the Lopez Library, the Lopez Museum invites everyone to embark on a journey in its upcoming exhibition, "Projections." The exhibition, ongoing until July 12, features antique charts by Alejandro Malaspina, Jean Francois la Perouse and renowned Jesuit Pedro de Murillo Velarde; navigational maps, military maps of 1944, and maps of Manila.
Works by visual artists, including Ray Albano, Fernando Amorsolo, Juan Arellano, Mafe Baluyos, Roberto Chabet, Lena Cobangbang, Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo, Erwin Leano, Juan Luna, Onib Olmedo, Alfonso Ossorio, Lordy Rodriguez and Macario Vitalis will depict spaces within and without, real and imagined. The Lopez Museum is at the G/F Benpres Building, Exchange Road, Pasig. Call 631-2417 or 449-2355.

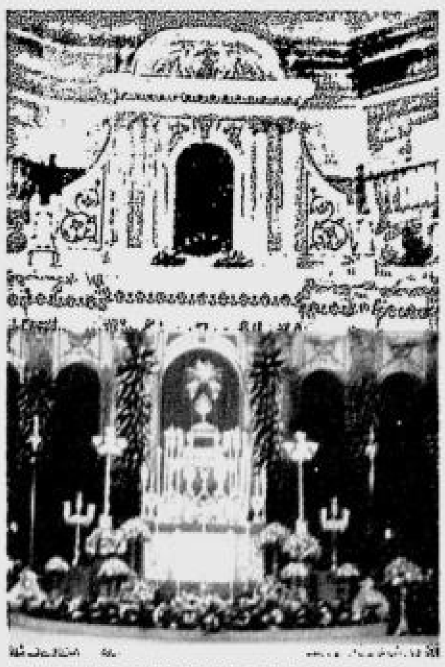
GROUP EXHIBIT. The Philippine Association of Hong Kong, in cooperation with the Philippine Consulate General, presented The Contemporary Filipino Artists Exhibition in Hong Kong. Featured were the works of Manny Baldemor, Magoo Valencia, Armie Cada, Cheryle Cranbourne, Nida Cranbourne, Joel Ferraris, Alfred Galves, Loreto Racuya, Bernadette Kranich, Catherine Peard, Ofelia Gelveson-Tequi and Francisco Segismundo, as well as those of the Porcelain Artists Group: Abigail C. Hills and Gloria Campbell. Also exhibited was fine jewelry by Jewelmer. The show was held at the Philippine Consulate General, 14/F United Centre, 95 Queensway, Hong Kong, SAR (Special Autonomous Region).

WORKSHOP. The National Museum will conduct a Basic Museology Training at its conference room, Old Congress Bldg., Manila, May 6-23. The extensive 14-day training will cover various phases of museum work. Specialists will talk on management strategies and practices, including museum management, collections management, care of collections, exhibitions and museum education. Registration starts April 21. Application forms are available at the Museum Education Division. Call 527-0278.

DANCE WORKSHOP. Odon Sabarre, first artist in residence of Region 8, announces the holding of the Summer Dance Workshop 2003 at the People's Center, in Tacloban City and SSPC Gym in Catbalogan, Samar. Classes is ongoing until May 20. Call (053) 321-2590 or 0920-22-2184.

CIRCUS THEATER WORKSHOP. The Australian Embassy sponsored a one-day workshop on theater and circus skills and a film screening for the young artists of Roxas City. Australian performers Anna Yen and Therese Collie conducted the free workshop. Screened was Yen's autobiographical film, "Chinese Take-away," which showed the culturally diverse Australian life.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES. National Museum Director Corazon S. Alvina invites children 7-12 years old to join this year's summer activities, April 15-June 20. Schedule follows: April 15—Mask making; April 30—Jewelry making; May 16—Pottery making; May 23—Paper mache; June 20—Story telling/Treasure hunting. Call 527-0278 or 524-3005.



BACOLOR'S 'ALTAR OF REPOSE'
Bacolor, the town that *lahar* buried, has been brought back to life with the help of historians and volunteers. On April 17, Holy Thursday, an Altar of the Repose will be installed by interior designer Jerome de Jesus and ecclesiastical art restorer Tom Joven at the San Guillermo de Aquitania Parish Church in Bacolor, Pampanga. The traditional holy rites will be officiated by Fr. Renato Sabili and will be highlighted by the traditional Visita Iglesia. De Jesus and Joven have recreated an authentic 19th century vignette befitting the classical motif of centuries-old Bacolor Church. For more information about the Lenten Rites at the church of Bacolor, call De Jesus at 933-6275, 933-6224 or 0917-9226557.

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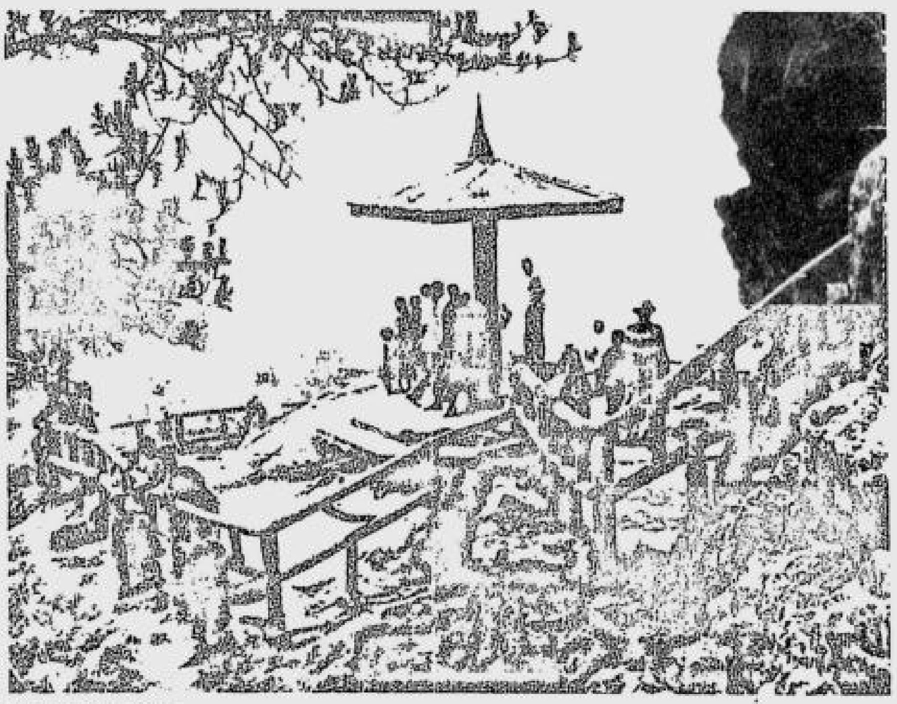
The City of Pines could be ranked among the world's most unique places, the only Philippine city that's part of the Hill Station tradition


MINES View Park

The Baguio that we don't know

From page E1

Conceived as cool mountain retreats, each Hill Station developed an architectural style of its own.

In Simla, houses were designed to make the city look like a Scottish mountain town. In the Cameron Highlands, the architecture was Tudor. Bandung buildings were elegant and cool, designed by Dutch and Indonesian architects in the Art Deco style.

Constructed in virgin highland places, all Hill Stations were planned from the ground up. Initial development happened rapidly a few years after the infrastructure was set up. Baguio was no exception.

Governor General William Cameron Forbes was instructed by William Taft (chair of the second Philippine Commission) to build a Hill Station. Forbes invited the eminent American architect of the day, Daniel Burnham, to plan the cities of Manila and Baguio. He came to the Philippines in 1904.

The plan of Baguio was typical of Hill Stations. Since most Hill Stations were also summer capitals of their respective countries, the main focus was on the government center and central park. Baguio followed the same classical design relationship, with the Baguio City Hall overlooking Burnham (yes, named after the architect) Park.

Commercial and residential districts were clustered, each group separated by forested open parks. Like all Hill Stations, Baguio was designed to be completely picturesque. Much of the city's charm was meant to be discovered either on foot or on horseback, so it became one of those rare pedestrian cities.

BAGUIO Cathedral

Forbes initiated the Baguio building program. He built the government center and offices were set up for the summer operations of the national government. Cottages for government officials and employees were built nearby.

The governor general also built the Mansion House, which was his official summer residence, and Wright Park in front of it.

Forbes had public lands given to different government agencies to be developed. The scheme resulted in Teachers' Camp, Public Works, Animal and Plant Industry, and the Baguio General Hospital, among others.

The American official set aside hilltops for the construction of summer residences of religious organizations. This brought to the city the Jesuits, Dominicans, and the Belgian CICM Order that built the Baguio Cathedral. The religious also established schools like Maryknoll, Brent and Easter.

Forbes set up the Baguio Country Club for recreation. But the new Baguio Country Club erased all visual connections to history by constructing a bland concrete structure for a new clubhouse.

Distinctive identity

The pines, hills and distinctive architecture, as one visual package, created a strong distinctive identity for Baguio that set it apart from other Philippine cities. Think of the wooden green-and-white houses with chimneys and Baguio stone trim. Where else in the Philippines will you find those?

Most of the traditional Baguio images have vanished, and nobody seems to be missing them. With the Philippine track record for conservation, all the other things that make the city different will go before we know it.

Conservation is strong in most of Asia's Hill Stations. And why not? These cities are among the most unique in Asia. They are picturesque in a way that is unique in their respective countries, an East-West fusion in architecture, and have all become holiday destinations for locals.

Both Simla and its authentic railroad that winds through steep mountains to reach the town are on the list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site.

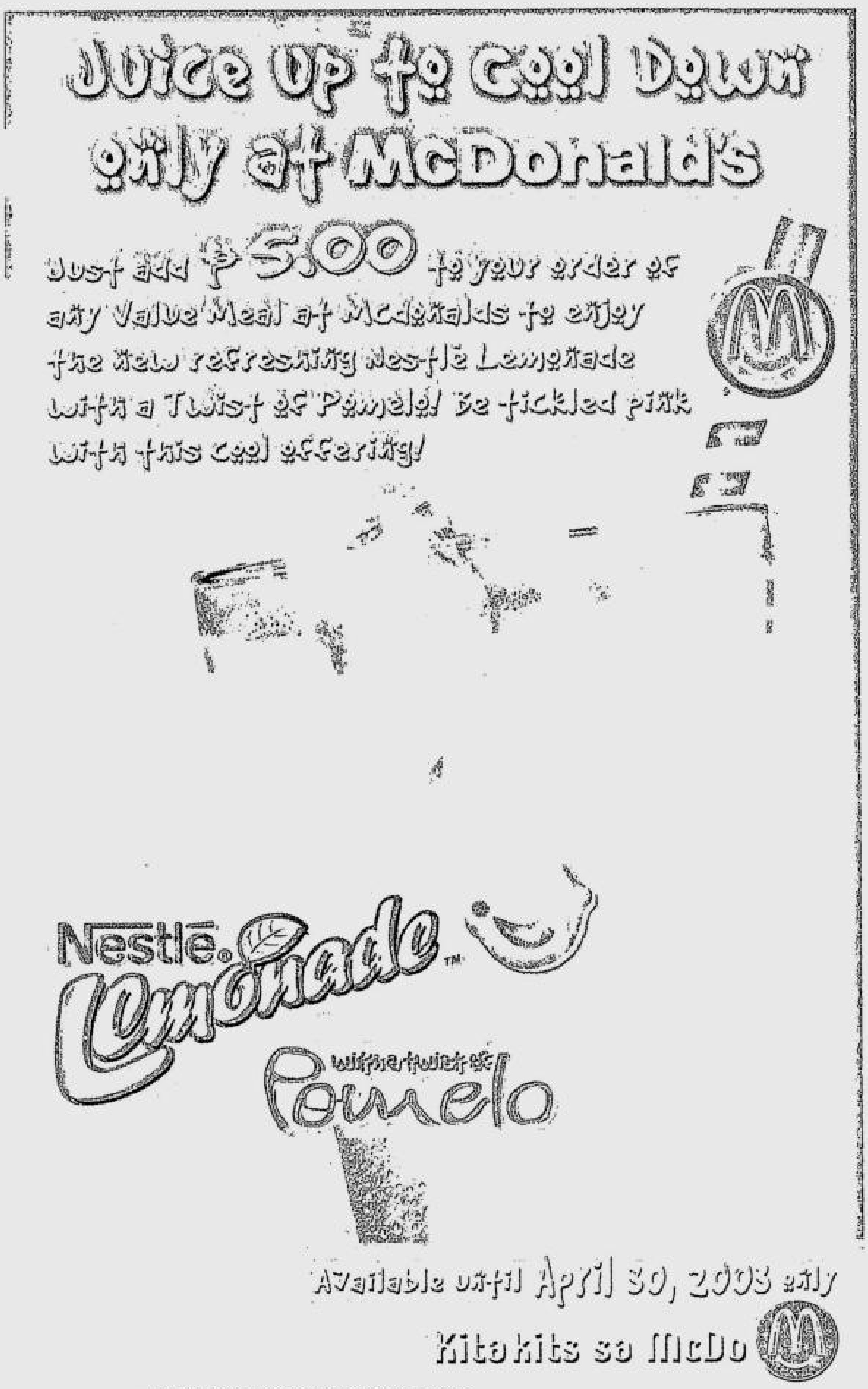
The Bandung Heritage Society is a leader in the conservation movement in Indonesia. Malaysia takes pride in its Cameron Highlands.

Do we take pride in Baguio? Pride should come naturally, what with its history, visual identity and geographic uniqueness in the Philippines. But pride of place for Baguio seems to be going fast.

What are we doing as Filipinos or as Baguio residents to maintain the qualities that make the city a special place in the Philippines?

Next week we will take a look at the threats to Baguio.

E-mail the author at afvillalon@hotmail.com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